

Socialist Worker

For a socialist alternative to New Labour

80p

Jack Straw covers up for murders by Israel

see pages 8 & 9

Join the Free Palestine rally this Saturday, 1.30pm in Trafalgar Square, London.
Called by the Palestine Solidarity Campaign

Palestinians commemorate Rachel Corrie and James Miller, killed by Israeli forces

Picture: GETTY

Now it's too much even for Clare Short

BLAIR WAR LIES FALL APART

Tony Blair's lies over Iraq now stand so exposed that even Clare Short has broken with him. Cabinet splits, however, have little meaning for those who are suffering in Iraq.



Oil

Tony Blair 'We don't touch it, and the US doesn't touch it.'

MTV, 7 March

The truth Last week's United Nations (UN) resolution tabled by the US and Britain gives them total control of Iraq's oil revenues.



Weapons

Jack Straw 'Should the UN have a vital role to play in respect of weapons inspections? Yes.'

The truth No role for the UN inspectors 'for the foreseeable future', says Donald Rumsfeld.



Occupation

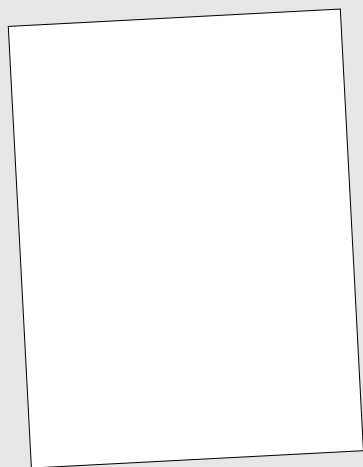
George Bush 'The UN will have a vital role to play.'

Belfast summit, 8 March
The truth The UN will have only an advisory function. US and British officials make all operational decisions.

continued on page 2

...and so do documents used to smear George Galloway

The forgeries & their links to the *Daily Telegraph* page 7



●continued from page 1

Iraq's government

TONY BLAIR: "Military action is to uphold the authority of the UN and make sure Saddam is disarmed"—MTV, 7 March.

The truth is the US and Britain will rule Iraq as an "occupying power".

Weapons #2

GEORGE BUSH: "We know that the regime has produced thousands of tonnes of chemical agents, including mustard gas, sarin nerve gas, VX nerve gas. It has a massive stockpile of biological weapons...capable of killing millions"—October, 2002.

White House official: "You don't necessarily have tonnes of chemical weapons or biological weapons sitting around in Iraq"—Monday of this week.

Iraq disaster

THE US announced last weekend it was withdrawing its mobile weapons inspection teams. They had found nothing.

It is also withdrawing US general Jay Garner, brought into oversee "reconstruction", and Barbara Bodine, the diplomat given charge of Baghdad.

Their rule has been a disaster. Hospitals in Iraq are still unable to function. There are frequent cuts to electricity and water supply. There has been an outbreak of cholera in Basra.

The credentials of the man the US has sent to replace Garner show what its priorities are.

Paul Bremer is a "counter-terrorism" specialist and a protégé of war criminal Henry Kissinger.

Meanwhile, new documents show the full role in Iraq Bush has given to Halliburton, the oil company that pays vice-president Dick Cheney \$1 million a year.

It had been reported to have got the contract to extinguish Iraqi oil fires. In fact the corporation has been given "operation of facilities and distribution of products"—that is, control of the oil industry.

Every single contract handed out by the US agency responsible for reconstructing Iraq has gone to US firms.

The commander of the US 101st Airborne Division in Mosul, northern Iraq, echoed that arrogance last week.

He said that he is looking to put a US officer with a translator inside the local TV station to monitor what goes on air. "Yes, what we are looking at is censorship," said Major General David Petraeus.



Rich prospering as poor fall behind

ASTONISHING NEW figures show that after six years of New Labour in government we have the biggest gap between rich and poor since 1990.

Poverty levels are now higher than under Margaret Thatcher, according to the latest figures from the Office for National Statistics.

Inequality under New Labour is on average a sixth higher than under Thatcher's 11-year rule. It is 10 percent higher than the Tory's 18-year rule as a whole.

Many of those who are critical of some government policies, such as Clare Short,

cling to the belief that New Labour has delivered something for ordinary people.

These figures show how wrong they are.

Some who are uneasy about Blair's premiership look to Gordon Brown to provide an alternative.

But it is Brown's policies that have helped to plunge millions into deeper poverty.

The report is based on a widely recognised formula, the Gini coefficient, that measures quality of life.

Behind the statistics are thousands of

people struggling to survive.

It shows that the low level of state benefits condemns many people to poverty. And vulnerable people are put off applying for benefits or tax credits by the mountain of forms involved.

New Labour made a high profile promise to take one million children out of poverty, but only managed to reach 500,000.

The National Council for One Parent Families has warned child poverty reduction urgently needs an increase in the minimum wage.

NEW LABOUR DEALS OUT MORE PUNISHMENT

Blunkett's new immoral crusade

WHAT IS New Labour offering to all those people fed up with Blair?

An authoritarian crusade from home secretary David Blunkett. Blunkett announced last week that he wants to increase prison sentences.

Someone aged 18 or over found guilty of killing a police officer or prison officer or "killing for gain" as in burglary or robbery would face a sentence of 30 years.

Others convicted of murder could face a "whole life" sentence.

Blunkett is playing the law and order card in a bid to gain cheap popularity. But experts in the justice system deride his plans.

"The current proposals imply that police and prison

officer murders are commonplace and out of control," said Professor Joe Sim from Liverpool John Moores University.

"Yet official figures indicate that between 1994 and 1998 28 police officers died, 21 of these deaths occurred in road traffic accidents, while four were murdered. The remaining three died of other causes.

"Between 1988 and 2000 29 prison officers died. Nine died off duty. Of the remainder 16 had heart attacks, while one was murdered."

Life sentences give no hope of parole for good behaviour. They will increase despair in the already overcrowded prisons.

Britain has the highest

number of prisoners in Europe—some 72,500 men, women and children. It has more people serving life sentences than the whole of Western Europe combined.

The Howard League for Penal Reform says Blunkett's plans could mean the number of prisoners serving a life sentence doubling.

British prisons already cost £2.2 billion a year.

Frances Crook from the Howard League says, "For every additional year served by the 5,000 extra lifers, we could have 5,000 additional teachers."

●THERE ARE no asylum seekers in Broxbourne in Hertfordshire. Yet the British National Party now has one of its 16 councillors

in this Tory heartland, after claiming the area was "filling up" with refugees.

David Blunkett and others have scapegoated asylum seekers so much that people think they are a "problem" even where they don't exist.

Tory, Labour and Lib Dem MPs on the home affairs committee issued a report last week whose sole remit was how to remove refugees from Britain.

The press seized on the MPs' claim in the report that the 110,700 asylum seekers who came to Britain last year—just 0.18 percent of the population—will lead "inevitably to social unrest".

Disgracefully, some papers want to blame the victims for the climate of fear they themselves are stirring up.

LABOUR PAINS

Prescott moves against FBU

IN A move Margaret Thatcher would be proud of, deputy prime minister John Prescott is closer to imposing a package of cuts and pathetic pay rises on firefighters and control room staff.

The second reading of a bill allowing him to override negotiations between the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) and local authority employers cleared the House of Commons with just 27 Labour MPs voting against.

Union leaders—led by Bob Crow (RMT), Mick Rix (Aslef) and Mark Serwotka (PCS)—condemned the attacks as a challenge to the whole trade union movement.

The TUC "expressed concern", but firefighters need far more than half-hearted words.

FBU members are putting pressure on their leaders to reinstate strikes. If they are forced to strike, everyone should get behind them.

"We have to strike now"—page 15

Godly Blair backs bigots

NEW LABOUR wants to let employers sack lesbian or gay staff if the workers don't fit their bosses' religious beliefs.

Exemptions to New Labour's Employment Equality Regulations came from the "highest level", a Downing Street source told the *Independent on Sunday*.

Some 100,000 teachers are employed in faith schools across Britain. Many others could also become targets.

No need to pay student fees

TUITION FEES are so unpopular even the Tories have announced they would get rid of them. But New Labour is pressing ahead with the fees in proposals due to be published next month.

Labour and the Tories say either students must pay higher fees or most young people must be kept out of university. Labour wants students to pay. The Tories want education for the elite.

In fact, abolishing fees and restoring even the basic grant would cost just £1 billion, a third of the money New Labour spent on the Iraq war.

Labour bullies fail schools

TONY BLAIR has announced another raft of market-driven gimmicks for London's schools.

On Monday he and education secretary Charles Clarke announced the biggest shake-up in education in the capital since the Second World War.

They singled out five local authorities as failing. They didn't say that in four of the five it is privatised companies, given control by New Labour, that are failing.

Clarke's solution is more privatisation. He wants to extend the number of city academies to 30. These are opted out of the state sector and business dictates to them.

Teachers at one academy—the Grieg school in north London—have voted unanimously for strikes over intolerable conditions.

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Unwelcome for Bush

GEORGE BUSH is coming to Europe in two weeks time. He will be at the G8 summit in Evian, France, on 1 June.

Building protests against Bush and the G8 was a key focus for the 300-strong conference of the Globalise Resistance anti-capitalist organisation in London last Saturday.

G8 protest organiser Christophe Aguiton was a keynote speaker. He explained plans for a series of protests, culminating in a mass demonstration on Sunday 1 June.

There will be a range of conferences and debates as well as the protests.

Two giant campsites have been set up for the protesters.

CONFRONT THE G8 DEMONSTRATE EVIAN 31 MAY–1 JUNE 2003 STOP THE MASTERS OF BUSINESS & WAR!

Transport & protest info from Globalise Resistance:
office@resist.org.uk * www.resist.org.uk * 07956 681 328



The short story with a bitter end

CLARE SHORT'S resignation has exposed the weakness of the Blair government. It shows that his loyal supporters are an incredibly thin layer of people.

Her departure has further increased the serious problems for Blair, a leader who only a few weeks ago was presented as walking on water by the media and many politicians.

They claimed he had faced down all opposition and was emerging triumphant from the Iraq war.

Blair trumpeted that now he would go on the offensive against "union militancy", ram more private companies into the NHS and tear up the 1945 model of the welfare state.

Now someone who played a crucial role in helping him to survive the war has said she can't stomach it any more.

Short's bloody hands

Short bears more responsibility than most for saving Blair when his future hung by a thread in the crucial parliamentary vote on war in March.

At one stage, says Jeremy Corbyn MP, it seemed likely that 200 Labour MPs might oppose Blair. That would have been the great majority of backbenchers outside the ranks of those with government jobs.

Short's key role was to herd up around 60 MPs and give them a pathetic excuse to back the war—if we support the slaughter we can play a role in repairing the devastation afterwards.

Short doesn't just say that she was lied to about the aftermath of the war. She also says that the Blair regime itself is rotting.

On Monday she condemned the "centralisation of power into the hands of the prime minister and an increasingly small number of advisers who make decisions in private without proper discussion".

AUSTRIA BIGGEST STRIKE FOR 50 YEARS

Workers at the Spittelau heating factory in Vienna were among those who joined a huge national strike last week against attacks on pensions—see page 16

She went on to call for "an elegant handover" to a new leader.

The deep resentment against Blair is not just about Iraq.

It is also about privatisation, foundation hospitals, the attack on the firefighters, low pay, top-up college fees, cuts in benefits and many other issues.

Blair does have a vicious agenda at home but there is no reason why he should be allowed to get away with it.

Real opposition now could mean a very inelegant end to Blair's rule.

Blair faces growing revolt over SATs tests in schools. Parents speak out—see page 5

A movement to challenge Blair

"THERE IS no denying that the mood against Mr Blair is far more bitter in the Labour Party than it has ever been," says the *Guardian*.

That is equally true about the mood among working people generally.

What sort of movement do we need to focus that mood, dump the Blair project and fight for a better world?

Clare Short won't lead it. She has resigned far too late and still thinks it was right to go to war against

Iraq. Short boasted of her work as international development secretary.

In fact, as George Monbiot wrote on Tuesday, "She would emote with the wretched of the earth for the cameras and then quietly crush them with a departmental memo."

She won more money for the department and then spent much of it on international Blairism. Her white paper on development was a hymn of praise to capitalist globalisation.

Short liked the poor to humbly accept her views and be suitably grateful.

When the people of Montserrat, reeling from the destruction of their island by a volcano, appealed for aid she ticked them off as "wanting golden elephants next".

Short also said that the demonstrators in Seattle and Prague against the World Trade Organisation and the International Monetary Fund were "self indulgent" and "intolerable".

Across Britain people are discussing how to build an anti-war, anti-privatisation and anti-racist alternative to Labour. Socialists are at the centre of those debates.

A genuine force will be built on the two million who marched against the war in February, not those who voted for that war.

It will be built by being rooted in the battles in the workplaces and the estates, not by manoeuvres among the inner cabals of the Labour Party.

Picture: PA Photos

Imperialism today: is the US unstoppable? **What would socialism be like?** Does the movement need political parties? **How do ideas change?** Is Labour just another Tory party? **Do Western workers benefit from Third World oppression?** Is racism getting worse? **What makes you working class?** What sort of cities do we want? **What is historical materialism?** Is Chavez the new hope for Latin America? **Can Palestine be free?**

We've all got questions Together we've got answers

Over 200 meetings and forums at Marxism 2003 with speakers including George Galloway MP, Lindsey German, Trevor Ngwane, Louise Christian, George Monbiot and Billy Hayes
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MI5 cover-up over dirty war

YOU CAN understand why the leadership of the IRA is reeling at the claim that the deputy head of its internal security organisation has been a paid informer since 1978.

But why should the core of the British state be thrown into panic at the naming of Alfredo Scappaticci as their top agent, codenamed Stakeknife?

The answer is simple. It shows how Britain's role in the 30-year war in Northern Ireland was as much based on lies and brutality as the invasion and occupation of Iraq. Far from keeping two warring sides apart, the British state either allowed or organised the murder of large numbers of mainly Catholic citizens to protect a sectarian et-up.

Scappaticci denies he's an informer.

But it is clear "Stakeknife" as recruited by the most shadowy British intelligence outfit in Northern Ireland, the Army's Force Research Unit (FRU), 25 years ago.

The Labour government of the time and its Tory predecessor had already cast aside two chances for peace.

The British state turned instead to the methods of a dirty war directed not only at the IRA, but at the base of Republican support in Catholic working class areas.

The late 1970s and early 1980s marked the high point of an assassination policy.

Having Stakeknife led the British state, through the RU, to authorise him to kill possibly dozens of people.

Some were Republicans accused by Stakeknife's IRA security squad of being informers and killed on his say-so to protect his identity.

Others were fellow agents of the army or MI5 judged to have become troublesome or past their use-by date.

Many, however, were totally unconnected with "the roubles".

Random

In 1987 no one could make sense of the murder of an elderly Catholic man, Francis Notarantonio, by the Ulster Defence Association (UDA).

There were plenty of random murders of Catholics by UDA and Loyalist gangs. But Francis's killers held a celebration or executing "the head of the RA in Ballymurphy".

He was, as Republicans and the British army knew, nothing to do with the Provisional IRA.

The naming of Scappaticci lends weight to revelations a few years ago about his murder.

Loyalist gunmen originally set out to kill Scappaticci. But the British army ordered an intelligence dossier (familiar?) which implicated Francis Notarantonio as a top RA man and passed it to the Loyalists.

British officers decided an innocent man could satisfy Loyalist bloodlust.

It was easy to redirect the execution, because the FRU had an agent at the heart of the UDA—Brian Nelson.

Information passed to Loyalists through Nelson was responsible for the murder of 10 Catholics, including Belfast solicitor Pat Finucane.

That is according to the handful of pages we have been allowed to see of the investigation into army collusion in Northern Ireland, conducted by Metropolitan

police chief Sir John Stevens. Stevens' interim report

KEVIN OVENDEN on key agent Stakeknife

last month said, "The security forces sanctioned killings. Informants and agents were allowed to operate without effective control and to participate in terrorist crimes."

An obscene and astonishing reality is emerging from revelations by former FRU soldiers such as the man known as Martin Ingram.

That is why defence secretary Geoff Hoon has mercilessly tried to impose gagging orders on him.

The British army ran agents on both sides. To protect infiltrators in the Republicans, they used infiltrators in the Loyalists to organise the murder of uninvolved Catholics.

This leaves aside the direct murders by the British army and attempts in the 1970s to destabilise the Labour government.

Senior

How much of this will ever come out through investigations by senior establishment figures such as Stevens?

Not a lot, if the public inquiry into the murder of 13 unarmed Catholics by the paratroop regiment on Bloody Sunday in 1972 is anything to go by.

Martin Ingram did eventually get to give evidence on Monday of this week. He cleared Sinn Féin's Martin McGuinness of the smear, spread by an MI5 agent known as "Infliction", that he fired a shot on the day.

But Irish journalist Eamonn McCann reports:

"MI5 has been allowed, by the tribunal under Lord Saville, to decide what witnesses will be called and what questions will be asked.

"Earlier this month, the inquiry heard that the witness statement of a key retired MI5 agent-runner called 'Julian' had been drafted for him by serving members of MI5 after they'd consulted documents in the MI5 archive.

"What documents? Nobody knows. Nobody was permitted to ask."

Perhaps a few junior heads might roll. But we already know the fate of senior figures who orchestrated the dirty war.

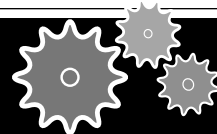
The former head of the FRU, brigadier general Gordon Kerr, is now the military attaché (ie head of spying) at the British embassy in Beijing—making him a key figure in British intelligence.

According to Irish magazine *Phoenix*, he has been secretly sent to Iraq.

That's the place where we are told Britain will use its experience in Northern Ireland to win hearts and minds and avoid the trigger happy antics of the US Marine Corps.

It's also the place where rather a large number of dodgy documents have turned up over the last month.

inside the system



IN THE FRAME



No. 10 Conrad Black

CONRAD Black owns the *Daily Telegraph*, which printed allegations against George Galloway.

Black also owns the hawkish *Jerusalem Post*, which published untrue reports of chemical weapons finds in Iraq.

Black also owns Hollinger International, which has on its board war criminal Henry Kissinger and defence policy board hawk Richard Perle.

Picture did not tell story

ON THE same day that US troops shot dead another two people in Fallujah, Iraq, the Associated Press newswire carried a photo and article from the town.

The story was headlined "US Troops Fire On Iraq Protesters Again".

The picture showed protesters holding a banner which read (in English) "Sooner or later US killers, we'll kick you out".

But this is how AP reported it: "'Sooner or later US killers, we'll kill you' read an angry banner in English unfurled in the faces of GIs on guard in the central city."

The article ran, with the wrong information, in *USA Today*, ABCNews.com, CBS News, *Washington Post*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Chicago Sun-Times*, *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, *Ha'aretz* (Israel), *Guardian* (London), *Globe and Mail* (Toronto), and dozens of local newspapers.

Will he stop and search you?

HOW ABOUT a "fully poseable male action figure" for your three year old in the shape of 12-inch riot cop with accessories?

Public Order PC SO595 has a telescopic truncheon, riot shield and handcuffs.

Your child could dress him up in a flak jacket, boots and helmet and have him use his loudhailer and fire extinguisher.

"All revenues will be recycled back into suitable Met police service activities," said a Met spokesman.

Demonstrators to beat up are not included.

Judge calls Carlo's killing 'legitimate'

AN ITALIAN court has dismissed a case against a policeman who shot dead Carlo Giuliani during protests against the G8 summit in Genoa two years ago.

The judge ruled that the paramilitary police officer Mario Placanica had acted in "legitimate self defence".

Carlo's father, Giuliano Giuliani, said he was "deeply disappointed" that the case had been dismissed.

"We were not asking for Placanica to be convicted, but we wanted a trial to take place," he said.

"The dismissal of the case makes me suspect that they want to conceal the truth."

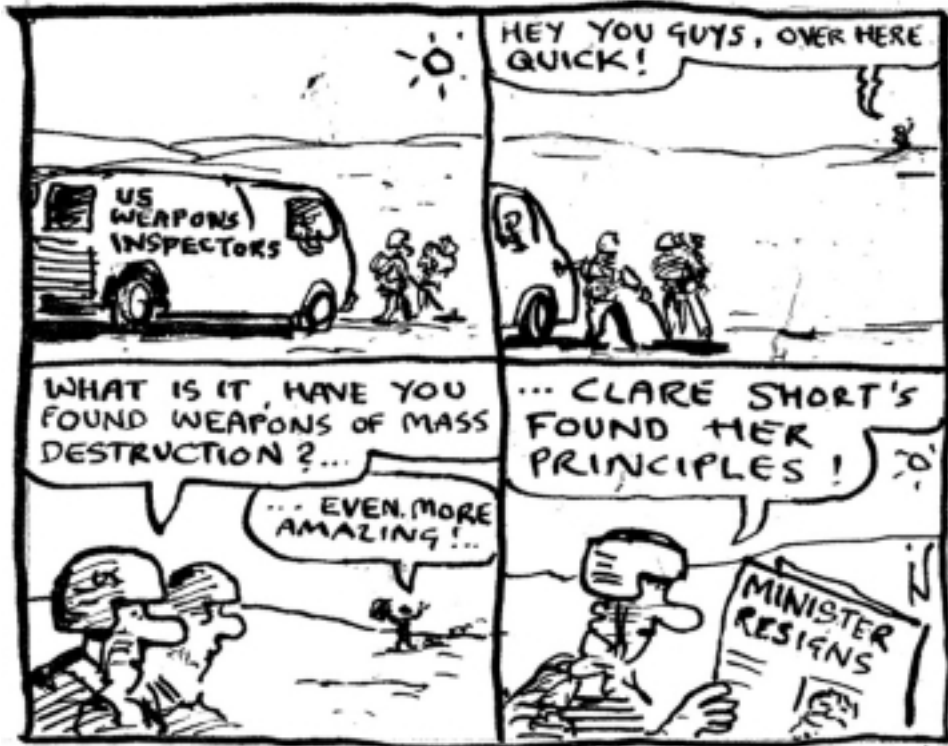


Picture: Jess Hurd

Police killed Carlo

The man who should really be in the dock is Silvio Berlusconi, who issued live ammunition to the forces deployed against the demonstrators.

Berlusconi's regime system-



Mossad loose in London

ASSASSINS ARE being allowed to roam the streets of London.

Who are these terrorists? The *Daily Mail* reported them last week on its front page with the headline "Israeli Secret Agents Target London".

Israel's secret service, Mossad, employs killers. New Labour is planning to let them use the excuse of the suicide bombing by two

Britons to crack down on Islamic groups in Britain.

Inside the System reported on 1 March that Mossad agents were preparing for "targeted assassinations" in "friendly" countries. Now that has become reality.

Mossad operatives have spent the last 50 years assassinating and kidnapping.

One of the most notorious examples took place in 1986 when Mossad agents

came to London and lured the Israeli nuclear scientist Mordechai Vanunu to Rome where he was kidnapped and hauled back to Israel.

This was because he had revealed the existence of Israel's nuclear weaponry.

In 1982 Mossad agents helped administer the murder by fascist Christian Phalange officers of 2,000 Palestinians in the Sabra and Shatilla refugee camps in Beirut.

Unilever's secret?

UNILEVER, THE Anglo-Dutch consumer goods giant, stands accused of encouraging child labour in India.

The company, whose brands include Dove soap and Lipton tea, is one of a number of multinationals named in a damning report on underage employment in India's huge cotton seed industry.

The report, published by the India Committee of the Netherlands, said Unilever buys hybrid cotton seeds from farmers who pay children a handful of rupees to work long hours in hazardous conditions.

It said about 90 percent of all labour in the Indian cotton seed market was carried out by 450,000 children, some of them as young as six and most of them girls.

"These girls work long days, are paid very little, are deprived of an education and are exposed for long periods to dangerous agricultural chemicals," the report said.

The report said children were offered biscuits, chocolate and other inducements to encourage them to work harder.

Unilever says it does not accept direct responsibility for employing the children.



WHO SAYS?

"He was a crook who absolutely cooked the books to hide his crimes."

MOHAMMED SAID NABULSI
former head of Jordan's central bank
on Ahmad Chalabi, the US's favourite to lead post-war Iraq

"America was good at conquering Iraq, but not so good at governing it and may prove worse at shaping its future, so clueless it seems about Iraqi aspirations."

HAROON SIDDIQUI
Toronto Star

"Foundation hospitals are really a Tory idea, based in part on the old NHS internal market."

DAILY TELEGRAPH
EDITORIAL

8 May

"We're teens, we're cute, we're radical to boot!"

RADICAL TEEN
CHEERLEADERS

in Los Angeles, US

"Who trained, who trained, Bin Laden? Who armed, who armed, Saddam Hussein?"

RADICAL TEEN
CHEERLEADERS

"It has been nearly a month since Saddam Hussein and his regime disappeared from Baghdad, and yet officials have offered no clear road map towards President George Bush's goal of stabilising the country under a democratic government."

WASHINGTON POST
EDITORIAL

7 May



Do you have a story for Inside the System? Send it to Inside the System, Socialist Worker, PO Box 82, London E3 3LH. All readers who send in a story that is printed are put into a monthly raffle for a book.

SATs for seven, 11 and 14 year olds

'New Labour's tests damage our children'

SOME 1.4 million children as young as seven sat down this week to five days of what one headteachers' conference has condemned as "annual torture".

The largest teachers' union, the National Union of Teachers (NUT), is campaigning for a boycott next year of the SATs tests forced on seven, 11 and 14 year olds (who took theirs last week).

WENDY GLENISTER, SANDRA ANGEL and MAXINE FRANKLIN have children at Fairlands Primary School in Stevenage, Hertfordshire. They spoke to *Socialist Worker* about why they want the tests scrapped.

Wendy You can sum up what's wrong with these tests in one word—stress.

The children are really worried. My son is sitting the year two tests, for seven year olds, this week.

This school goes out of its way not to let the year two children know they are facing the tests. But as a parent you still feel the pressure mount.

Maxine For the 11 year olds, like my child, they start to feel the pressure months before the tests.

The SATs aren't really for the children, or the teachers or the school.

They are there for the government.

As parents you try not to go on about the tests. But the children still pick up the idea that "you've got to get level four"—the government's target.

Why, when it's not for them? As a teaching assistant I've worked with children that have done year six SATs and gone to a senior school where they don't use the SATs results.

That school assessed children as they arrived and had a far better picture of what they were capable of and what they needed.

That was about looking at individual children, not filling in boxes.

Sandra I was in a SATs briefing meeting for parents the other night and one of them said, "This isn't to help the children. This is about the school league tables."

Not one other parent spoke up to disagree with him.

Isn't the children's well-being more important than tables?

My daughter was practising over the holidays and getting really upset. She said, "I've got to do a maths test. And I've got to do it in 45 minutes."

Well, she can't do it in 45 minutes. Does that mean she's no good? I don't think so.

She can do the work and solve the problems, but she can't do it under exam conditions.

All the SATs tell you is what you knew already—she doesn't take to doing maths under pressure. It doesn't tell you about what she can do.

Everyone makes mistakes under pressure. But why should it lead to you being labelled at the age of

11 or seven?

Wendy If the government is saying the SATs are there because parents want them, then the government is wrong. They should try asking parents.

But that would mean the politicians having to listen to the answers.

Sandra I'd far rather find out through a report from the teacher.

The teacher has an overall picture built up from all the time they spend with your child. It's not reduced to an accidental test in 45 minutes.

Maxine I have to say my views have changed over the last few years as I've seen the damage these tests do.

Teachers here try to make as many subjects as they can fun, relaxing and interesting.

But they've got at least one hand tied behind their backs.

If the school doesn't go along with the system, then they get the inspectors sent in and pressure from the authorities on the teachers.

Lots of schools have got financial problems across the board, but the government only cares about the SATs, so the resources go there.

We had a girl in breakfast club who came in in tears. We couldn't find out why.

It turns out she is working so hard, but still can't do some of the work and she is frightened about the SATs.

That poor kid came here full of hope about school and now she's in danger of being put off forever.

Sandra We protect our children in all sorts of ways. If anything, we are overprotective in society today.

But then we allow the



Campaigning against SATs in Brixton, south London, last Saturday

government to inflict this on them.

Maxine We should call it annual torture for children week.

If you treated your child like that—mentally abused them for a week—they'd have social services round.

Sandra The government and the politicians have got no idea what it's like for Joe Public. They send their kids to the opted out schools or the private schools.

The posh schools don't have to do the SATs.

So the SATs are meant to be so good but the schools that have the smallest

class sizes and that cost tens of thousands of pounds to send your kids to don't have them.

My son at secondary school was really good at art, but he wasn't at English. It just didn't click—it will do in time.

But he was told, "You can't get a job doing art." So

the one thing he was really good at was just shoved down.

Wendy Teachers' roles should be teaching the children lessons, not pushing them through the tests.

This idea from the teachers' union of a boycott of SATs is the best thing I think they've ever come up with.

'Campaign now': head

JOHN HAYES is head-teacher of Fairlands Primary and an NUT member: "THE NATIONAL union is moving, we hope, to a ballot for a boycott."

But we have seen before how a euphoric atmosphere over an issue has been allowed to die down.

So we have got a national meeting that Hertfordshire NUT is hosting in central London at the end of next month.

We hope that will attract representatives from across the NUT and wider. We want to get as many teachers, parents and school governors involved in this campaign as possible.

That way, when we move to a ballot the work is already done.

The NAHT headteachers' conference shows the thing is starting to turn.

They are talking about following the NUT line. If we can get them on board, that would be fantastic.

Very many people now see through the government's obsession with target setting.

It used to be tied to individual target setting for children and how you move children forward.

Now it is about targets for all schools and national target setting, which is not for the same purpose at all and has no educational value.

New Labour fears that if we get rid of the SATs, we get rid of the market in education.

The whole thing then turns into a system that can become properly comprehensive, which they don't want.

It would enable children to develop properly, regardless of social background, but they are not interested in that.

Instead, they want competition because it fits with business, it looks like business and that's what they understand."



Maxine, Sandra and Wendy have children doing SATs

Stop the SATs

CONFERENCE FOR ALL PARENTS, GOVERNORS AND TEACHERS

Saturday 28 June, 11.30am-3.30pm, South Camden Community School, Charrington Street, London WC1

(King's Cross/Euston ➔)

E-mail Jon Berry, secretary Hertfordshire NUT, for more details: nutjon@aol.com



The Unison union's anti-racist meeting in Sunderland last Thursday

Picture: Ray Smith

New forces join the fight to challenge the Nazi BNP

IT'S NOW time to build a mass campaign, uniting all those who want to stop the Nazis.

The BNP stood 54 candidates in the north east of England and poured in massive resources. They failed to win a seat but the Nazis still managed to get over 13,000 votes in Sunderland and 3,000 in Gateshead.

This was the backdrop to the excellent meeting held in Sunderland last week to launch a united campaign against the BNP in the north east.

The meeting was called by Kevin Rowan, TUC regional secretary, Gill Hale, Unison regional secretary, and Rahana Azam of the MB.

Over 90 people attended

including local Labour councillors, representatives and branch officers from the TGWU, Unison, GMB, Natfhe, CWU and NUT unions, as well as local anti-racist groups and the Anti Nazi League.

It was far and away the most representative labour movement meeting there has been here for many years.

A region-wide shop stewards meeting on combating fascism was proposed. The Durham Miners' Gala, one of the biggest events in the labour movement calendar, is to have anti-fascism as one of its central themes.

Cultural and musical events are to be organised in the area.

Yunus Bakhsh national executive committee member Unison

Clare Williams convenor Northern Region Unison

●THE CITY of Sunderland is free from Nazi councillors despite a concerted effort by the BNP.

They stood in all 25 wards and openly declared they were poised to take seats from Labour.

Labour have dominated the council since time immemorial. They have presided over large areas of the city deteriorating. And the only growth area in jobs is call centres.

The BNP focused on the issue of asylum seekers. There are only 1,000 asylum seekers in a city of 300,000, but the BNP did build a base of support, especially in the north of the city.

Their failure to secure a seat was due to several factors, their own arrogance and the resilience of working class people.

Another factor was the campaign against them.

This was led by the city's two main unions, the GMB and especially Unison.

I met lots of union members in meetings who were enthusiastic about campaigning to stop the Nazis.

The campaign to drive the Nazis further back continues, with a meeting called by the TUC and Unison in the city.

Sean Kelly joint senior convenor social services, City of Sunderland Unison (personal capacity)

George Galloway spoke for millions

GEORGE GALLOWAY and Helen Salmon addressed a meeting at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine a couple of weeks ago.

It was Galloway's first meeting after the *Daily Telegraph* printed allegations against him. I was worried about the reception George would get.

Management were terrified and insisted that we remove the school logo from the lectern.

We needn't have worried—around 300 staff and students turned up (there are only 800 at the school), and George was warmly received.

Last week an academic at the school told me he'd resigned from the Labour Party in protest at George's suspension, saying, "If

there's no room for George Galloway in the party then there's no room for me."

Here the attack on George is rightly seen as an attack on all those who opposed the war, and an attack on freedom of speech and democracy.

There's more going on. Both Helen and George spoke about how imperialism is part of a system of global capitalism that must be resisted. They were received with enthusiasm and applause.

That's why Blair is scared, that's why he wants to silence George Galloway, and that's why socialists should do everything they can to make sure they fail.

Adrian Cousins Amicus-MSF rep, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (personal capacity)

Blair wrecking Irish peace

IN ALL the horror of the recent events in Iraq it is easy to overlook what is happening in Ireland.

Blair, having been a real enthusiast for a "war process" in the Middle East, now looks like he is heading the same way in Northern Ireland. He is throwing the peace process into crisis.

Since the second ceasefire in 1997 the Provisional IRA have not actually fired a shot in anger.

They have allowed independent government-approved witnesses to see where their arms are dumped, and to witness the destruction of some of these weapons.

They also issued a

statement that guaranteed that they would "definitively set aside arms" if the Good Friday agreement was fully implemented.

The Unionists, though, want complete public surrender and destruction of weapons.

Furthermore, their behaviour since the peace process began indicates that they don't want to share power with Republicans on any terms.

But Blair has thrown his support fully behind them, thus endangering peace altogether.

Just as mad dogs get a lust for blood once tasted, it would appear Blair is hooked on the war bug.

Pat Stack North London

War is global

DAVE TAYLOR (Letters, 10 May) asked about Scandinavian countries' "lack of involvement in wars".

All the Scandinavian countries were involved in fairly continuous wars with each other and their neighbours in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries.

Both Norway and Denmark fought in World War Two and are active members of the NATO military alliance.

Denmark was one of the few European countries to fully support the war on Iraq, sending warships.

Sweden profited from trading with all sides in World War Two, including Nazi Germany.

Sweden's arms industry is one of the biggest in the world.

Harald Olsen South London

YOUR VIEW ●●●

Privatisation spoils ballot

THE LOCAL election in Harlow has turned into a real scandal.

The council, run by a Lib Dem/Tory coalition, organised a postal ballot for the election and put it out to a private company to organise.

The company sent out over 3,000 forms without the proper stamp. So about 20 percent of those who voted had their ballots declared invalid.

And postal voting is supposed to be the future!

This whole fiasco shows how privatisation undermines real democracy.

Tony Sullivan Harlow

Grab chance to get at Bush

I AM heading off to Evian for the protest against Bush and the G8.

I really wanted to go to the protest when Bush came to Belfast during the war. I was so infuriated because I come from an Irish Catholic background and I was just disgusted that Bush could pose as a peacemaker.

Now at Evian at last!



Bush is a hate figure

have a chance to have a go at Bush. Lots of people I know want to come. At college there are degree shows but there are people in my anti-war group who are up for it.

Katy Bannon Wimbledon

Students going to Evian

SO FAR a dozen LSE students are going to Evian. We have all been heavily involved in the Stop the War Coalition. We are proud of the movement we have built in Britain but feel that the resistance must continue.

George Bush's arrival in Europe must be met by a sea of demonstrators. We must show him he faces the world's second superpower—our movement.

We are going to stand against the corporate carve-up of Iraq and against the barbarity of global capitalism propped up by military power.

Tom Whittaker London School of Economics

Right to tell tales on SATs

GREAT STORY about the SATs by Pat Thomson (*Socialist Worker*, 3 May).

Kids get really worried about these pointless

exams that do no good and waste tons of useful time.

They are about measuring the progress of future economic production units, not about educating kids and giving them a sense of curiosity and wonder.

Mark Crompton London

Greens taking wrong turn?

I VOTED for the SSP and it was great to see them shaking up the party at the oath swearing ceremony last week.

As well as the tens of thousands who voted SSP, many others voted for the Greens because they were anti-war.

But the Greens are now



SSP's Rosie Kane, an MSP

being tempted by an "informal understanding" with Labour's Scottish first minister, Jack McConnell.

This would mean being sucked into boring mainstream politics alongside those who have fought a war in support of the world's biggest polluter.

J Wilkie Glasgow

Straight from horse's mouth

CHECK OUT the Project for the New American Century website (www.newamericancentury.com). It unmasks all the people in the US government today.

Years ago they were writing about the need to wage war on Iraq. What happened on 11 September was just an excuse.

A friend of mine thought the war would liberate Iraq. When he looked at that website he changed his mind.

Ant Casey East London

US keeping its grip on Iraq

WE CLAIM to have liberated Iraq but the Iraqi people see us as invaders and occupiers. They are now calling for the Americans and British to leave.

It has been said that this war is about oil. The governments denied this. But recently America said they wouldn't accept an Iraqi government that didn't agree with them and they would control the production and sale of oil. If this is not imperialism, what is?

Ron Acock Ilkeston

DEFEND GEORGE GALLOWAY

by KEVIN OVENDEN

Forgeries blast case against anti-war MP

"I BELIEVE the documents are a forgery by someone who had no familiarity with the inner workings of the Iraqi intelligence service."

With those words a "highly regarded expert" blew a gaping hole in the smear campaign against anti-war MP George Galloway on Sunday.

The expert had examined thousands of official papers captured from the Iraqi regime by Western intelligence agencies in the 1991 Gulf War.

Now he has rubbished six documents the *Mail on Sunday* obtained nearly three weeks ago purporting to show that George Galloway received yet more millions from the Iraqi government.

The source of the *Mail on Sunday* forgeries, a former general in Iraq's Republican Guard, also provided documents to the US paper the *Christian Science Monitor*.

This paper used them to claim Galloway had received \$10 million from the Iraqi regime. All the evidence shows those documents, too, are crude forgeries.

The journalist who got them, Philip Smucker, also works for the *Daily Telegraph*, the paper that made the first of these fantastic allegations against Galloway.

The discovery by the *Mail on Sunday* that it had been conned into buying fake documents has smashed key links in the chain of newspaper lies.

In addition to the "highly regarded" expert, the *Mail on Sunday* showed its documents to forgery expert Dr Audrey Giles, former head of the Questioned Documents section of the Metropolitan Police Forensic Science Laboratory.

She said, "The signatures on the questioned letters are fundamentally different from the examples of undisputed signatures of Mr Galloway provided for me."

"For the questioned documents to be genuine, Mr Galloway would have to have two entirely separate signatures differing not only in structure but also in fluency."

"There is very strong support for the view that the signatures on these documents are poor attempts to simulate his genuine signature."

As well as the fake signatures, the letters show

'Someone somewhere is fabricating stories against me. The question is who and why'

other evidence of forgery. The letterhead contained stars crudely tippexed on and golden lettering which the Iraqi document expert had never seen on any other official letters.

The expert adds the documents "should be signed by the Presidential Secretary, Abid Hamid Mahmoud Al Khattab."

"However, this name is misspelled as 'Abdul Hamid Mahmoud' from the Special Presidential Office."

"Not only that but the letterhead belongs to the Special Security Organisation when he is not even a member of the SSO."

Stamps

"Qusay Hussein, Saddam's son, provides a second signature, but he signs off as the supervisor of the Republican Guard, when in fact his official title is Director of the Special Security Organisation."

"Also the final signature on the bottom of the page is from a Republican Guard commander which guarantees the money was delivered to Mr Galloway."

"Why would a military commander be responsible for financial affairs with a British MP?"

"Such activities would be handled by Iraq's Intelligence



George Galloway spoke to 400 people in Manchester last Friday (above) who gave him three standing ovations. Another 270 heard him speak in Lewisham, south London

Service, the Mukhabarat."

Visa stamps in George Galloway's passport show he was not even in Iraq on two of the three dates between 1999 and 2002 when he is supposed to have signed receipts for \$4 million.

On one of those dates, 11 August 2002, he was in the *Mail on Sunday* office in London working with the deputy editor on an article.

Socialist Worker has learned that a third expert, an Iraqi opposition figure said to have once been Saddam Hussein's Chief of Protocol, says after the new evidence that he now believes the documents are forgeries.

He has already said the earlier *Christian Science Monitor* documents are fake.

Those documents claim Galloway picked up a "check" for \$3 million on 14 January 2003. On that date

Galloway was speaking in parliament in London.

The source of both sets of documents handed to the *Mail on Sunday* and *Christian Science Monitor* was General Salah Abdel Rasool.

The *Mail on Sunday* got theirs after paying the highest price, £1,500, in an "auction" three weeks ago.

Within two weeks of US forces entering Baghdad there was a market for forged documents, some implicating George Galloway.

Galloway says, "The discrediting of two sets of documents sold to newspapers which alleged I was paid almost \$15 million by Saddam is very significant to me. I am suing the *Telegraph* and the *Christian Science Monitor*."

"Someone somewhere is fabricating stories against me. The question is who and why."

There is a hidden agenda behind the Labour smears

THE GROUNDS the Labour Party has given for suspending George Galloway have nothing to do with the allegations right wing papers are hurling at him.

Labour's reason is even worse. It is that Galloway brought the "party into disrepute" by the way he campaigned against the war.

Labour Party chairman John Reid claims Galloway called Bush and Blair "wolves" in an interview

for Abu Dhabi television.

In fact, he said two of the richest countries in the world, the US and Britain, were "falling like wolves" on Iraq, an impoverished and battered nation. That is something millions of people here and around the world agree with.

The purpose of the suspension is to stop Galloway becoming the Labour candidate in a new seat in Glasgow as his own Westminster constituency is dis-

appearing due to boundary changes, and to discredit the anti-war movement.

■ Send messages of support to George Galloway at gallowayg@parliament.uk

■ Protest to Labour Party chair Ian McCartney. E-mail psianmccartney@cabinetoffice.x.gsi.gov.uk. Phone 020 7219 4503. Fax 01942 828 171.

■ Stop the War Coalition "Defend George Galloway" petitions are available at www.stopwar.org.uk

Trail leads to original newspaper allegations

THE DOCUMENTS presented by the *Daily Telegraph* a month ago, which began the string of allegations against George Galloway, contains similar inconsistencies to the proven forgeries.

● Two dates are inconsistent and the signature is illegible.

● One document is supposedly from January 2000, but refers to Dr Amina Abu Zaid as George Galloway's wife—they didn't marry until two months later.

All the sets of documents obtained by the three papers—the *Telegraph*, the *Christian Science Monitor* and the *Mail on Sunday*—purport to show financial dealings with Saddam Hussein and his two sons.

In addition to the inconsistencies in each, taken together they present a truly incredible series of allegations.

● The *Telegraph* has Galloway receiving £375,000 and being told by the "head" of intelligence that that is the only money he is getting.

● The *Mail on Sunday* documents claim Galloway had just six weeks before got £1.2 million from one of Saddam's sons.

● The *Telegraph* then has Saddam saying Galloway would get no more money.

● Four months later, according to the *Christian Science Monitor*, one of Saddam's sons generously gives Galloway £1.5 million.

Alarm bells should now be ringing



Applause in Manchester

ROY GREENSLADE knows a thing or two about smear campaigns.

Greenslade was the editor of the *Daily Mirror* in 1990. That was the year when the paper accused miners' leader Arthur Scargill of using strike funds to pay off his mortgage and taking money from Libya and the Soviet Union.

The *Mirror's* allegations signalled open season on Scargill and the miners' union, the NUM.

Last year Greenslade formally apologised to Scargill, acknowledging that the accusations were false and the paper had been used by the secret services to discredit him.

Now Greenslade says a smear

campaign is again being used to discredit a prominent left wing figure, George Galloway.

He wrote in Thursday's *Guardian*, "Like Scargill before him, the floodgates open and suddenly Galloway is caught in the wash as newspapers compete to drown him in sewage."

"Galloway, unlike previous miscreants, is being traduced for nothing more than stating an opinion."

"Labour is trampling on the rights of one of its own MPs to speak his mind at a crucial moment."

"Scargill was effectively marginalised after 1990. Is the labour movement prepared to allow Galloway to suffer the same fate?"

HIDDEN HISTORY

How Labour Party has weeded out dissent

NEW LABOUR laid into George Galloway last week, suspending him from the party for daring to speak out against the war on Iraq.

The leadership want to shut him up. They know one effect of suspension is to rule him out of being nominated for a safe Labour seat in Glasgow.

Their treatment of Galloway is in stark contrast to those who have certainly "brought the party into disrepute".

Peter Mandelson became Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in 1998. He was forced to resign over the revelation that he had bought a house with a £400,000 loan from then Paymaster-General Geoffrey Robinson.

Robinson was under investigation by Mandelson's department at the time. Mandelson soon returned as Northern Ireland secretary. He had to resign again, following allegations of misconduct over a passport application for Millennium Dome sponsors the Hinduja brothers.

He was never suspended from the party.

The Parliamentary Standards Committee last year upheld three complaints against Keith Vaz, the Leicester East MP. They criticised him for refusing to cooperate with an inquiry into his conduct and failing to declare cash donations. Vaz was found to have given "misleading information" about his financial links to the Hindujas.

Vaz is still a Labour MP.

Robert Maxwell was a Labour Party member until his death in 1991. Yet he is notorious for robbing £450 million from the workers' pension fund of his Mirror Group Newspapers.

Before that, as a Labour MP, he agreed a takeover bid for his Pergamon group from an American firm.

It was then revealed that Maxwell had inflated Pergamon's profits to lubricate the takeover moves. Department of Trade inspectors found that Maxwell was "not in our opinion a person who can be relied on to exercise proper stewardship of a publicly quoted company".

Expulsions have occasionally been used against "moderate" Labour MPs caught up in alleged



Galloway: chased by wolves

personal or financial scandals.

Galloway has not been suspended over any sort of "scandal". The party leadership claims the charges against him are not based on the "documents" published in the *Telegraph*.

He has been attacked for his opinions. Expulsions for holding ideas are used only against the left—and they are used with plodding regularity.

1980s Labour's leaders launched a witch-hunt against the left as part of the early "modernisation" project.

By the time it was finished, investigations of local parties and disciplinary action had affected party members in over 80 constituencies.

The first targets included anyone associated with the *Militant* left wing newspaper. Six members of its editorial board were expelled in 1983.

But the net spread much wider. Between 1986 and 1990 Labour's National Constitutional Committee dealt with 251 disciplinary cases. Around 150 of them ended in expulsion.

Then in 1991 left wing MPs Terry Fields, who had served 60 days in jail for poll tax non-payment, and Dave Nellist were suspended from party membership.

Both were expelled after a kangaroo court hearing. A certain Clare Short explained the "justice" of the hearing in a press briefing.

Nellist was so popular that he almost defeated the official Labour candidate at the next general election.

1940s A group of Labour MPs signed a telegram in 1948 to Pietro Nenni, the Italian Socialist Party leader, congratulating him on election successes.

Labour's national executive committee had

earlier sent a message of support to the smaller, breakaway anti-Communist "Socialist Unity Party". The offending Labour MPs were told that unless they withdrew they would be thrown out.

John Platts-Mills MP, who had organised the telegram to Nenni, was soon expelled.

Labour's executive sent Konni Zilliacus MP a letter listing how his speeches and writings included "attacks on the Labour government's foreign policy". Zilliacus replied that it was his "prime duty as an MP to stick to the foreign policy statements and pledges on which I fought the general election".

In 1949 Britain joined NATO. Zilliacus opposed the treaty, arguing that it went against the UN charter and would accelerate the arms race.

He voted against it along with five other Labour MPs. He and fellow MPs Lester Hutchinson and Leslie Solley were expelled.

1930s A group of Labour MPs helped set up the Socialist League to fight for left wing policies inside the party.

Its members worked alongside Communist Party members and the Independent Labour Party to agitate for unity against the rise of fascism. The league disbanded itself. But those members who continued to work in a broad front with Communists were punished.

In 1938 MPs Aneurin Bevan (later to be readmitted and become the architect of the NHS), Stafford Cripps (later to be a Labour Chancellor of the Exchequer), George Strauss, Charles Trevelyan, Edgar Young and Robert Bruce were expelled.

Galloway's suspension is in this tradition—but is even worse. In the other cases there were suggestions, however trumped-up, that the targeted Labour MPs were organising a "party within a party". There is no such suggestion now.

Under Blair the party has come to its most naked intolerance of ideas that upset the leadership.

Charlie Kimber

Israel murdered them to hide the truth

Israeli troops shoot three British citizens. The British government does virtually nothing. Two British suicide bombers kill three Israelis. The British government rushes into action to support Israel

TOM'S shooting wasn't an accident," Michelle De Mello, a close friend of Tom Hurdall, told *Socialist Worker*. "He was trying to help Palestinians go to the mosque in the Yivna area of the town of Rafah. Two Israeli watchtowers over-look the mosque.

"Israeli soldiers had started shooting so it was decided to leave the area. Two young girls froze. Tom went to help them and he was shot in the head.

"He was wearing a fluorescent orange shirt marking him out as an

international citizen. It's a complete waste. Lives mean so much. It's even worse for the Palestinians.

"The Palestinians are being publicly humiliated. Every day Israelis shoot at Palestinians. The day before Tom was shot a 20 year old man was walking to the shops in Rafah. He was shot dead. His brother had been shot in the neck recently.

"The Palestinians are being pushed down when they're already down. I came here trying to be objective, but there's no way you can be. I have seen such horrific things.

"There is a cover-up going on. It's painful. We're going to do our best to get what happened to Tom heard. Tom has done so much and he's only 21. He doesn't deserve this."

Laura, a peace activist who is also in Rafah, spoke to *Socialist Worker*.

"Rafah is the bottom of the bottom," she says. "The Israeli treatment of Rafah is so harsh and indiscriminate that it's not surprising that internationals are being killed.

"It's hard to say it but I think Israel is targeting activists. In a month and a half there have been four incidents against internationals in the Occupied Territories. Three of them have been in Rafah.

"We're an unwanted presence. Israel wants us out. They want to do whatever they want unchecked. That's why it's so important that we stay.

"What's happening to us pales in comparison to what is happening to the Palestinians. We're learning in a small way what it's like to be Palestinian. I'm Jewish and I have to say 'Not in my name' to what Israel is doing in Palestine."

An Israeli sniper shot United Na-

tions official Iain Hook in the back in the West Bank town of Jenin last November.

The Israeli authorities claim the sniper thought Hook was a Palestinian fighter carrying a gun. Hook has ginger hair, is tall and was carrying a mobile phone.

"No one believes the Israeli story," says one UN official. "The soldier was a trained commando. He had a sight that magnified at least three times and he was only 20 metres away.

"What really concerns us is the lack of an apology and remorse. The message that goes out to every Israeli soldier is that it's OK to kill the UN."

James Miller was shot by Israeli soldiers in Rafah earlier this month. The soldiers that shot James knew he was a journalist.

Miller was a cameraman working with journalist Saira Shah on a documentary about Rafah's children. They had also worked together on *Behind the Veil*, the acclaimed TV documentary about Afghanistan under the Taliban.

Miller, Shah and their Palestinian translator Abd al-Rahman Abdullah were filming Israeli soldiers preparing to demolish another house.

They left the house by walking towards two Israeli armoured personnel carriers parked outside. Miller wore a

Palestinians pay tribute to murdered US activist Rachel Corrie

helmet marked "TV" in yellow fluorescent tape. Shah's vest had the same markings. Abdullah carried a large white flag lit by a torch carried by Miller. They shouted that they were foreign journalists in English and Arabic.

A soldier began firing at them. "After the second or third shot, James was hit," says Abdullah. Miller lay on the ground for 25 minutes before being taken to hospital.

Anthony, Tom Hurdall's father, said last week, "Following the bombing at the bar in Tel Aviv and the killing of three Israelis, the British government jumped to give a statement of support for Israelis, freeze funds and make arrests.

"In contrast, the almost passive reaction of the British government at the shooting of three of its nationals in Israel is very disturbing."

'We want your voices to be heard'

TO THE people of Gaza.

Greetings to all of our friends in the Occupied Territories.

We, the parents, sister and brother of Rachel Corrie, want to thank you for all you did for Rachel while she was working in Rafah and for all you have done to honour her memory since she died on 16 March.

We are grateful to those of you who became Rachel's friends and who welcomed her into your homes and shared your tea and food with her.

She wrote to us about you and about your wonderful families. She admired how you supported one another even as you struggled against the cruelties of the occupation.

We will always remember the respect and love with which she was treated in life and in death by the people of Gaza.

It lifts our spirits to hear of the Rachel Corrie Children and Youth Cultural Centre in Rafah and the Rachel Corrie Centre for Women's Empowerment.

We know there are now newborn babies named Rachel and streets that bear her name, too.

Rachel had dreams of making connections between Rafah and her hometown in the United States—Olympia, Washington.

had encouraged the children there to write letters to the children in Rafah.

Rachel wanted your voices to be heard in the United States. Now, we want you to know that many people in the United States are working very hard to make these dreams of Rachel's come true.

The dreams are not forgotten. Rachel is not forgotten. And your suffering is not forgotten.

We want you to know that each day here in the United States we are doing all that we can to make Americans aware of your suffering."

They put one leg in Afghanistan and one in Iraq, and they keep both peoples hungry. The only things we got from America is bombs—nothing else."

AFGHANISTAN

Afghans demonstrated last week against US occupation

'The US only brings bombs'

SOME 3,000 people took to the streets of the Afghan capital, Kabul, last week in the first demonstration against the US military occupation of their country (pictured above).

The protest took place just weeks after the world's media began broadcasting scenes of similar protests in Iraq.

US forces have remained in Afghanistan since the end of the one-sided war there 18 months ago.

Most of last week's protesters came from the educated middle class layers, and some had previously looked to the US.

Sediq Afghan, the protest organiser, was a leading critic of the Russian occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s.

He said of the US last week, "They have lied to us. At the beginning we thought that the US was one of the good countries and it would help us.

"Then we saw they came here to capture Afghanistan. I think the US intends to keep us hungry."

There was a mixture of slogans on the march, with a few raising Islamist slogans. But the overwhelming feeling was anger at the US and its puppet government in Kabul for failing to help ordinary people.

Many of the protesters were government employees who have not been paid for months.

Abdul Mohammad, a former soldier who lost part of his arm in a mine explosion, explained the government compensation for wounded veterans is just \$2 and even that is often not paid.

He said, "The US are breaking their promises. They promised to build our country and make factories but they have not kept their promises.

"They put one leg in Afghanistan and one in Iraq, and they keep both peoples hungry. The only things we got from America is bombs—nothing else."

Days before the protest Donald Rumsfeld, the US

defence secretary, visited Afghanistan and announced the US had moved from "major combat activity" to "stabilisation and reconstruction activities".

In fact, hostile fire has forced the US to abandon five of its outposts in Afghanistan. On 25 April two US soldiers were killed and four others wounded.

US general John Vines admits that while pockets of the country are stable "in other parts, it's terribly dangerous.

"That has not changed and that probably won't change in the foreseeable future."

The government of Hamid Karzai has no control of the country outside metropolitan Kabul.

It has received just 16 percent of the \$1.8 billion in aid promised last year. The total budget for the US military teams who are to be engaged in reconstruction work is just \$12 million.

Ethnic tensions

In a recent interview Pierre Salignon of the aid group Medecins Sans Frontieres said, "Kabul is 70 percent destroyed, and people throughout the city live in an extremely precarious situation.

"The public assumes that peace in Afghanistan has returned, but the reality is different.

"There is insecurity for civilians amidst an armed peace with ethnic tensions."

Most of the country is in the hands of feuding warlords and local militia leaders who establish their own laws, seize money through local "taxes" and work with the US.

US officials at last month's session of the UN Commission on Human Rights blocked discussion of human rights abuses in Afghanistan.

They fear that any investigation would reveal what their allies are doing now.

All this a year and a half after the "liberation" of Afghanistan. All this the "liberated" people of Iraq have to look forward to.

Dr Ghayasuddin Siddiqui talks to *Socialist Worker*

United against the war—but also over other issues

Picture: S O'Neil

A common struggle

DR GHAYASUDDIN Siddiqui is leader of the Muslim Parliament of Great Britain and a prominent member of the Stop the War Coalition. He spoke to *Socialist Worker* about the impact of the anti-war movement on the Muslim community in Britain.

Dr Siddiqui uses the term Islamist to refer to groups the mainstream press would usually call Islamic fundamentalists.

IF YOU start from 11 September, immediately after there were a number of meetings which led to the formation of the Stop the War Coalition.

We were there from the very beginning. We saw this development as very positive, one that would allow the Muslim community to get out of their ghettos and play a role in mainstream politics, in this case a mass protest movement.

We said this was a great opportunity. I remember sending a statement to all Muslim community leaders saying that we must realise this.

There is a lot of pent-up frustration, especially

among our youth. Through this movement we showed them there is a real alternative to being supporters of Bin Laden.

We have seen a growing number of Muslims, especially young people, participating in the demonstrations.

For them to see being part of wider society and a mass movement as the way forward is very important.

An Islamist organisation like Hizb ut Tahrir issued a statement saying we should have nothing to do with the Stop the War Coalition, that it was led by the left, and so on.

We took the view that the future of Iraq will be decided by Bush and Blair, and big business which ultimately they represent.

Historically the Islamists have always been accused of working with big business.

We said, is that what you want to be remembered for? For goodness sake reconsider your position.

Their position was just silly or stupid. They had one demonstration on their own and I was told it wasn't very big.

That is not to say people like this will disappear, but their space is shrinking. That has been a major result of the anti-war movement.

A debate is beginning to happen about what is the best way of pursuing political issues arising in the Muslim community.

The Muslim community, like any other, has loads of organisations of different persuasions.

But I think that the old barriers are breaking down.

Ordinary Muslims are discussing, and they often find that the arguments put forward by their own leaders are not so powerful as some of those put forward by others.

A few weeks ago a hardline youth movement invited me to talk to their meeting. This could not have hap-

pened before.

Also within the Muslim community issues like secularism, human rights and civil liberties are being discussed.

In the Islamist view these are secular issues that the faithful are not supposed to be interested in. But now people are seriously discussing all these issues.

A number of us feel we need a youth movement for the Muslim community, one that addresses issues like globalisation, the environment and such things.

So far no Muslim youth group has declared for that kind of agenda.

So there have been a number of meetings within the community, and we are hoping such a group will be launched soon.

This would be a major development and a result of engaging with the mass movement.

Bush's war is not a war about Islam. I have always said, do you honestly believe that if Afghanistan was a Buddhist country the US and Britain would not have attacked?

They attacked Afghanistan because it provides the shortest route for a pipeline from Central Asia to the Indian Ocean.

The massive demos around the world negate the argument.

If this is a war against Islam, why are all these people who aren't Muslim marching?

Go out and build bridges

People are beginning to see it is something different. My argument is that people all over the world demonstrate because they see the Americans going out for full spectrum dominance.

It is a war between the oppressor and the oppressed, and we are the oppressed, millions of us from all kinds of backgrounds.

We must go out and build bridges, and make it a common struggle.

The anti-war movement has also politicised a whole young generation. Look at young people and school students—they

have been so brilliant.

The anti-war movement has inspired millions all over the world.

The challenge for the whole movement now is to channel the energy into something positive and make it long lasting.

There are other issues. The *Asian Times* asked me to comment on the Labour performance in the elections.

I gave two reasons for their poor performance. One was Labour's participation in Bush's war on Iraq and the other is privatisation of public services.

These are the major reasons why traditional support for Labour, including in the Muslim community, has been eaten away.

A challenge for us all

The problem at the moment is that in a general election there is no other alternative so the Labour Party will still get elected.

Do we want Iain Duncan Smith to be prime minister? Of course not.

Charles Kennedy and the Liberals have failed too. I thought the war was a great opportunity for them, but Kennedy wasn't up to the mark.

There is a great challenge for the movement, to build an alternative people can trust.

In the recent elections only around 30 percent of the electorate voted.

Some say this showed people were not interested in politics. But then in the movement a huge number of people were very interested in politics.

People are coming to realise that when a party gets elected, when they are in power, they become prisoners of the establishment.

We have seen how big business has taken charge of the White House. If that can happen in the US it can happen elsewhere.

Unless the progressive movement rises to the challenge we can see things like in Burnley with the BNP.

They feed off the social exclusion,

poverty, unemployment. Nobody says it is Thatcher's policies that are responsible for these, not immigrants or asylum seekers.

In areas like Burnley, a lot of the segregation you see in schools and housing is the result of deliberate policies by councils and governments.

If a large number of Asians live in one area this is not their choice, it is the policy choices of people in authority.

We are against ghettoisation. Government and council policies have to ensure that people interact at all different levels.

We can build a movement which can counter this globalisation process and US hegemony.

We have to come together if we want any chance to counter the forces against us, otherwise we will all be losers.

More on Muslims in Britain

THE 2001 census revealed some interesting facts about the multicultural nature of society in England and Wales.

Some 37.3 million people declared themselves to be Christians of one sort or another.

Around 1.5 million said they were Muslims, with 552,000 Hindus, 329,000 Sikhs, 260,000 Jewish people and 144,000 Buddhists.

A more recent census, taken in May this year, shows the Muslim population has a very high proportion of young people. Some 33.8 percent are aged 0-15, and 18.2 percent are aged 16-24.

Of the Pakistani community some 54.5 percent were born in England and Wales.

More than a third of Muslim children live in households where no adults work.



in my view

Blur feel that Blair is now out of time

BLUR HAVE just released their new album, *Think Tank*. The band's lead singer, Damon Albarn, was one of the most outspoken opponents of the war against Iraq.

To many, his stand is even more remarkable given his close connection to New Labour just eight years ago.

Between 1995 and 1998 Blur, along with Oasis, Pulp and Suede, were being labelled by the music press as the saviours of British rock—Britpop had been born.

Blair was desperate that some of the movement's appeal would rub off on New Labour.

According to John Harris, the author of *The Last Party*, in the spring of 1995 Blair, along with Prescott and Alastair Campbell, invited the Blur frontman to Westminster for a chat about the band backing New Labour's bid for power.

Campbell spoilt the party somewhat when he asked Damon, "What if you turned round and said, 'Tony's a wanker'?" Damon assured him that the scenario was unthinkable.

Blair's love-fest with Britpop continued after he won the election in 1997.

He invited Noel Gallagher from Oasis and Alan McGee, the founder of Oasis's record label, Creation, to attend one of his Downing Street soirees. After the meeting Noel Gallagher boasted to the press "Blair's the man! Power to the people."

The marriage of Britpop with New Labour was complete. Not since the days of the Beatles and Harold Wilson had pop music and the government of the day become so intertwined.

The reasons for this marriage were twofold.

For the first time since the late 1960s British rock music was experiencing critical and financial acclaim. Secondly, after 18 bleak years of Tory rule, many musicians, just like millions of people, thought things were going to get better.

Leading the charge

Union Jacks were painted on guitars, Blair was photographed reading the *NME*—it was Cool Britannia.

But the hopes soon came crashing down. New Labour's anti working class, pro-market policies kicked in quick and hard.

By 1998 Damon Albarn was leading the charge against New Labour's plans to scrap student grants. Chumbawamba tipped a bucket of water over Prescott at the Brit awards.

After the government introduced the New Deal scheme, Alan McGee told the press that Labour was proving to be worse than the Tories.

The *NME* put a picture of Blair on their front cover with the headline "Ever get the feeling you've been cheated?"

During the London mayoral elections Damon Albarn publicly came out in support of Ken Livingstone.

The divorce was complete when Blair backed Bush's war in Iraq. Damon, Massive Attack and Coldplay all came out against the war. After years of silence the godfather of Britpop, Paul Weller, played at a Stop the War Coalition benefit concert in London

Which brings me back to the new Blur album *Think Tank*.

In the late 1990s the *NME* claimed, "Blur are as British as Madness and the Small Faces."

I think the *NME* were right in what they said but not in the way they meant it. The music of Madness was rooted in ska and reggae, an import from Jamaica. And the Small Faces' sound was heavily influenced by black soul and blues music.

Damon is following in the same tradition. His cartoon pop group, Gorillaz, is an eclectic mix of reggae, hip-hop and dance beats. His most recent solo album, the magnificent *Mali Music*, is a celebration of that country's heritage.

The new Blur album is reconnecting the music to a heritage stretching from the Beatles through to punk, and along the way borrowing from Moroccan, jazz and folk music.

Damon Albarn's music and his stand against the war are worth celebrating.

Martin Smith

REVIEWS

Television The BBC's documentary series shows the First World War as a consequence of our social system

THE KILLING FIELDS

THE FIRST World War was the most important event of the 20th century. From its four years of mud and mass slaughter the world we live in emerged.

In 1964 the BBC produced a 26-part series entitled *The Great War*. It is now being repeated on BBC2 on Saturday nights.

In its own right this documentary series is stunning. It is a series that educates while doing justice to the events of 1914 onwards.

The cost of this war was terrible. Ten million soldiers died—about 5,600 per day for its duration. One in two who served became casualties.

Its battles were unimaginable horror. At Verdun in 1916 the French and German armies fired 23 million shells at each other.

The Battle of the Somme is the worst military disaster in British history—over 20,000 soldiers died on the first morning of the attack.

This was a war fought between rival imperialist powers. But officers were rooted in 19th century military thinking while using modern industrial weapons.

Machine-guns, gas, high explosives, flame-throwers and air attacks slaughtered the lines of men marching out of the trenches.

The three great empires vanished. The victors, France and Britain, were mortally wounded, and the United States became the greatest power in the world.

Yet from all this horror there also emerged a great hope. In 1917 Russian workers and soldiers rose up against the Provisional Government—which had replaced the Tsar—and established the first workers' state.

This was before circumstances allowed Stalin to take power and murder the revolution.

In a world where millions thought



Trench warfare



Soldiers waiting for burial

the war would never end the Russian Revolution was a beacon.

The series captures all these events in detail. A whole episode is devoted to the Russian Revolution alone.

The very first episode shows a Europe immersed in the grandeur of pomp and circumstance. But it also reveals the underlying tensions that would lead to war.

It examines the imperial ambitions of the Kaiser's Germany as it overtook Britain in becoming the most formidable industrial power.

It shows the splendour of Europe's royal families while documenting the poverty of the working classes.

It talks about the war in a complete context that includes the waves of labour unrest, the struggle for Irish home rule and the Suffragette movement.

The war is shown as a consequence of the social system and not as a consequence of individual or national traits.

Its main focus is the Western Front, where the most barbarous activities took place. This was trench warfare, the war of attrition.

It lets the veteran soldiers speak for themselves and in 1964, when it was made, these men were still lucid about their experiences.

As the years rolled on and the murderous stalemate continued, disillusion quickly set in.

In 1916 British officials were shocked by a song the troops were singing as they left for France: "Send me brother, send me mother, but for gawdsakes DON'T SEND ME".

In 1917 French troops went to the front bleating like sheep. Most of the army then mutinied and refused to fight any more offensives.

By the last year of the war, in the words of another veteran "morale in the BEF [British Expeditionary Force] was terrible... We didn't care which side won so long as it was over."

The series explores many different aspects of the period. It is hard to imagine a TV company producing such a panoramic view of any historical event today.

Is what it has to say still relevant? The first episodes were shown in the weeks leading up to the Iraqi war, then it mysteriously vanished.

Now, after the war is over, it's back on our screens. Perhaps the programmers watched it and decided a few episodes of this might make viewers less sure about "fighting for one's country".

Nigel Davey

The Great War is shown every Saturday evening on BB2.

PREVIEW

Five to catch this week

- CORRESPONDENT—WAR SPIN**
Sunday, 7.15, BBC2
How the UK and US governments used the media, particularly embedded journalists, to swing public opinion behind the war.
- STATE OF PLAY**
Sunday, 9pm, BBC1
Conspiracy thriller. A teenager is shot dead and the woman he spoke to on the morning of his murder appears to have committed suicide.
- PANORAMA—THE WAR PARTY**
Sunday, 10.15, BBC1
Investigation into neo-conservatism in America and its support for the war in Iraq. Is it behind a new kind of imperialism?
- GAZA**
Sunday, 9pm, C4
A *Dispatches* special on the Gaza Strip, showing the appalling level of everyday violence.
- CAMBRIDGE SPIES**
Friday, 9pm, BBC2
Drama about the lives of Britain's most notorious spies—Philby, Burgess, Blunt and Maclean.

Compiled by Matthew Cookson

FILMS

Terrorism, US power and mutants

25th Hour

Director: Spike Lee

In 24 hours you'll be locked away in a prison hell-hole for seven years. How do you spend your last moments of freedom?

Spike Lee's answer is disappointingly obvious. Put your affairs in order, settle some scores and have one last party.

Despite great visuals, sharp editing and a moving score, the story of Monty, a drug dealer with a heart and taste for the good life, is not convincing. There are interesting

moments reminiscent of Lee's earlier films and some post-9/11 questioning.

But if you were looking for the complex, gritty realism of his classic *Do the Right Thing* you'd have come to the wrong place.

Yuri Prasad

X2: X-Men United

Director: Bryan Singer

If you want an action blockbuster that cheers on the resistance of the oppressed, head off to see X2.

The story is about a minority persecuted for being mutants.

One mutant discovered his special powers after watching his parents being taken away by the Nazis. He argues mutants should wage war on humans.

Another mutant wants to win the humans round and show them mutants are not a threat.

The two groups are forced to unite when the US president launches a pre-emptive strike against them.

Helen Shooter

meetings, forums and events | tel: 020 7538 5821 | e-mail: forums@swp.org.uk

IF YOUR AREA ISN'T SHOWN PHONE THE NUMBER ABOVE

Big ideas in informal settings

Marxist forums

BARNSELEY
Fascism: what it is and how to fight it
Wed 21 May, 7.30pm,
Barnsley Central Library,
Shambles St.

BIRMINGHAM HARBOURNE
Palestine: is there a road map to peace?
Tue 20 May, 7.30pm,
Open University Centre.

BIRMINGHAM SMALL HEATH
Road map or dead end: can Palestine be free?
Wed 28 May, 7pm,
Small Heath Youth and
Community Centre, Muntz Rd.

BRIGHTON
Lenin: what can we learn from a man who made a revolution?
Thu 22 May, 7.30pm,
Phoenix Community Centre,
Phoenix Place.

BRISTOL EASTON
The Project for the New American Century: how do we resist the new colonialism?
Thu 22 May, 7.30pm,
Cafe Maitreya,
St Mark's Rd.
With Mark Farmer.

BRISTOL MONTPELIER
Do Western workers benefit from Third World oppression?
Thu 22 May, 7.30pm,
Bristolian Cafe,
Picton St.

BURY
Blood and oil: the real history of the Middle East
Thu 22 May, 7.30pm,
Arts and Crafts Centre,
Broad St.
With Richard Searle.

CANTERBURY
Do Western workers benefit from Third World oppression?
Thu 15 May, 7.30pm,
Pascucci's Cafe, High St.

CARDIFF
Is this the best democracy we can get?
Wed 28 May, 7pm,
Glamorgan County Council Staff
Club, Westgate St.

CHESTERFIELD
May 1968
Wed 21 May, 7.30pm,
Market Halls, Market Square.

COVENTRY
Islam, resistance and revolution
Wed 28 May, 7.30pm,
Central Methodist Hall,
town centre.

CRAWLEY
Can capitalism go on forever?
Wed 21 May, 7.30pm,
Three Bridges Community Centre,
Gales Place.

DARLINGTON
Che Guevara: more than a revolutionary icon?
Thu 15 May, 7.30pm,
Larchfield Community Centre,
Larchfield St.

DERBY
Karl Marx: the first anti-capitalist?
Thu 29 May, 7pm,
Infusion Cafe,
Uttoxeter Rd.

DUDLEY
The grand strategy of the American Empire
Wed 28 May, 8pm,
Claughton Community Centre,
Blowers Green.

GATESHEAD
Che Guevara: more than a revolutionary icon?
Tue 20 May, 7pm,
Trinity Centre,
High St.

GLOUCESTER
WTO, IMF: do they dominate the globe?
Wed 21 May, 7.30pm,
Warehouse,
Parliament St.

HARTLEPOOL
What would socialism look like?
Fri 23 May, 7pm,
Hartlepool Library, York Rd.

HULL
How do we stop the Nazis?
Thu 22 May, 7pm,
Avenues Community Centre.

KETTERING
Malcolm X and the fight against racism
Wed 28 May, 7.30pm,
Cafe Sedani,
Lower St.
With Kevin Ovenden.



What can we learn from Lenin?

LEEDS BEESTON
Are women liberated today?
Thu 22 May, 7.30pm,
Tunstall Road Community Centre.

LEICESTER
If money and missiles can cross borders, why can't people?
Mon 26 May, 7.30pm,
Cafe Mozart,
London Rd.

MANCHESTER LEVENSHULME
Who benefits from Third World oppression?
Thu 29 May, 7.30pm,
Sultan Cafe,
Stockport Rd.

MARGATE
Lenin: what can we learn from a man who made a revolution?
Thu 29 May, 7.30pm,
Help Centre, Hawley Square.

MIDDLESBROUGH
What would socialism look like?
Thu 22 May, 7.30pm,
St Mary's Community Centre.

NEWCASTLE GOSFORTH
Palestine: is there a road map to peace?
Thu 22 May, 7.30pm,
Employees Club,
Jesmond Rd.
(nr Robinson Library).

NEWCASTLE HEATON
What can we learn from Lenin and the Russian Revolution?
Thu 22 May, 7pm,
Truick Road Community Centre.

NEWCASTLE WEST
Malcolm X and the fight against racism
Thu 15 May, 7pm,
Lynwood Business Centre,
Lynwood Rd.

NORWICH
Who benefits from Third World oppression?
Thu 5 Jun, 7.30pm,
Norwich Millennium Library,
city centre.

NOTTINGHAM ST ANN'S
The grand strategy of the American Empire
Thu 15 May, 7.30pm,
Chase Neighbourhood
Community Centre,
Robin Hood Chase.

OXFORD CITY CENTRE
Dario Fo and revolutionary theatre
Sat 24 May, 2pm,
Mitre, High St.
With Tom Behan.

OXFORD EAST
How capitalism underdeveloped Africa
Wed 21 May, 7.30pm,
East Oxford
Community Centre.

ROCHESTER
Does the media control our ideas?
Thu 22 May, 8pm,
Eon Internet Cafe,
High St.

ST ALBANS
Palestine's future: road map or dead end?
Mon 2 Jun, 7.30pm,
upstairs, Trinity Church
(cnr Victoria St/Beaconsfield Rd).

SCUNTHORPE
Road map or dead end: can Palestine be free?
Mon 26 May, 7.30pm,
Central Community Centre,
Lindum St.

SHEFFIELD HEELEY
Palestine: road map or dead end?
Wed 21 May, 7.30pm,
Hartley Street Community Centre.

SHEFFIELD HILLSBOROUGH
Che Guevara: popular icon or symbol of revolution?
Thu 15 May, 7.30pm,
Burton Street Project
(next to Hillsborough Barracks).
With Dave Hayes.

SHEFFIELD HUNTERS BAR
Is there an alternative to capitalism?
Wed 21 May, 6.30pm,
Coffee Revolution, Eccleshall Rd.
With Dave Hayes.

SHEFFIELD SHARROW
Fascism: what it is and how to fight it
Thu 22 May, 7.30pm,
Highfields Library,
London Rd.
With John Ross.

SOUTHAMPTON
Lenin: what can we learn from a man who made a revolution?
Thu 15 May, 8pm,
Cook House,
St Mary's St.

SUTTON COLDFIELD
How do we fight fascism?
Wed 21 May, 2pm,
Sutton Coldfield College,
Lichfield Rd.

SWANSEA
Does the media control our ideas?
Thu 15 May, 7.30pm,
Uplands Diner, Uplands.

WOLVERHAMPTON
The Project for the New American Century: how do we resist the new colonialism?
Thu 15 May, 7.30pm,
Lighthouse Cafe,
Chubb Buildings,
Frier St (nr ➡).

YORK
Why do people vote for fascists?
Wed 28 May, 7.30pm,
Priory Street Centre.

FORUMS IN LONDON

DOLLIS HILL
Road map or dead end: can there be justice for the Palestinians?
Thu 15 May, 7.30pm,
Cafe Grafenola,
83 Dudden Hill Lane
(nr Dollis Hill ☺).

ELTHAM
Democracy: is this the best it gets?
Tue 27 May, 7.30pm,
St Mary's Community Centre,
Eltham High St.

EUSTON
Palestine: can it ever be free?
Wed 21 May, 7.30pm,
Cafe Muse, Museum St.

HAMMERSMITH
Do all revolutions end in tyranny?
Thu 15 May, 7.30pm,
Palenswick House,
241 King St.

HIGHBURY
The Project for the New American Century: how do we resist the new colonialism?
Thu 15 May, 6.30pm,
Stingray Cafe,
Highbury Grove.
With Suzanne Jeffery.

HONOR OAK
Democracy: is this the best it gets?
Thu 29 May, 7.30pm,
Ackroyd Community Centre,
Ackroyd Rd
(off Brockley Rise).

ILFORD
Martin Luther King and the politics of civil disobedience
Thu 22 May, 7.30pm,
Kohi-Noor,
Ilford Lane.
With Martin Smith.

LEWISHAM
Third World oppression: who benefits?
Wed 28 May, 7pm,
Hunkarim Restaurant,
(cnr Lee High Rd/Marischal Rd).

NEW CROSS
Blood and oil: the real history of the Middle East
Tue 20 May, 7pm,
Moonbow Jake's Coffee Bar,
New Cross Rd.

PECKHAM
Lenin: what can we learn from a man who made a revolution?
Wed 21 May, 7pm,
Peckham Library,
Peckham High St.

STREATHAM
Martin Luther King and the politics of civil disobedience
Wed 21 May, 7.30pm,
Boogalu's,
Sunnyhill Rd.

VICTORIA
Palestine: is there a road map to peace?
Tue 20 May, 6.30pm,
King's Arms,
77 Buckingham Palace Rd.

VICTORIA PARK
Does the media control our ideas?
Mon 2 Jun, 7.30pm,
Mojo's Restaurant,
Lauriston Rd.

WALTHAMSTOW
If money and missiles can cross borders, why can't people?
Thu 15 May, 7.30pm,
Le Petit Cafe, Hoe St
(cnr Jewel Rd).

WOOLWICH
Third World oppression: who benefits?
Wed 28 May, 7pm,
Friends Cafe, Barnard Close.

PLYMOUTH
07803 620 390

PORTSMOUTH
07801 290 411

SCOTLAND (SW Platform)
07855 023 739

SHEFFIELD
07905 678 506

South East London
07951 737 003

South London
07734 706 256

Southampton
07811 210 036

Swansea
07759 901 392

Thames Valley
07929 618 579

Tyneside
07748 653 627

Waltham Forest
07796 697 271

West London
07958 996 777

York
07984 132 371



INDEPENDENT WORKING CLASS ACTION
The workers create all the wealth under capitalism. A new society can only be constructed when they collectively seize control of that wealth and plan its production and distribution.

REVOLUTION NOT REFORM
The present system cannot be patched up or reformed as the established Labour and trade union leaders say. It has to be overturned.

THERE IS NO PARLIAMENTARY ROAD
The structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class. They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against the workers.

The working class needs an entirely different kind of state—a workers' state based upon councils of workers' delegates and a workers' militia.

At most parliamentary activity can be used to make propaganda against the present system.

Only the mass action of the workers themselves can destroy the system.

INTERNATIONALISM
The struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries.

We oppose everything which turns workers from one country against those from other countries.

We oppose racism and imperialism. We oppose all immigration controls. We support the right of black people and other oppressed groups to organise their own defence. We support all genuine national liberation movements.

The experience of Russia demonstrates that a socialist revolution cannot survive in isolation in one country. In Russia the result was state capitalism, not socialism.

In Eastern Europe and China a similar system was later established by Stalinist parties. We support the struggle of workers in these countries against both private and state capitalism.

We are for real social, economic and political equality of women. We are for an end to all forms of discrimination against lesbians and gays.

THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY
To achieve socialism the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party. Such a party can only be built by activity in the mass organisations of the working class.

We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests. We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions.

Fill in this form and send it to
PO Box 82, London E3 3LH

Join the socialists

Name	E-mail
Address	
Postcode	
TU/college/school	Phone

Links

Anti Nazi League
www.anl.org.uk
(020 7924 0333

Globalise Resistance
www.resist.org.uk
(020 7053 2071

Stop the War Coalition
www.stopwar.org.uk
(020 7053 2153/4/5/6

Socialist Alliance
www.socialistalliance.net
(020 7791 3138

Defend Council Housing
www.defendcouncilhousing.org.uk
(020 7987 9989

Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers
www.defend-asylum.org
(07941 566 183

Spark
(07905 998 675

Scottish Socialist Party
(0141 221 7714

Local SWP

Barnsley
07881 558 590

Birmingham
07949 028 362

Black Country
07941 834 125

Bradford
07811 403 299

Brighton
07818 027 408

Bristol
07711 718 519

Cambridge
07950 142 464

Camden & Islington
07961 337 640

Cardiff
07815 775 819

Central London
07957 316 094

Chesterfield
07881 558 590

Coventry
07712 047 873

East Anglia
07946 269 024

East London
07753 697 743

Exeter
07939 558 115

Hackney
07788 770 741

Home Counties
07905 589 865

Kent
07950 610 257

Lancashire East
07968 952 180

Lancashire West
07931 725 633

Leeds & West Yorkshire
07734 265 291

Manchester
07946 413 763

Merseyside
07952 410 718

Norwich
07733 137 201

Nottingham
07956 477 778

Weekend meetings discuss key issues



Michael Lavalette's successful Socialist Alliance election campaign forged a new unity (above). Socialist Alliance conference voted to involve wider forces (top right)



Debate: where should socialists go from here?

The anti-war movement changed politics. That was the starting point for many speeches at the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) Council on Sunday. It brought together elected delegates from across Britain

THE SCALE, politics and militancy of the anti-war movement colour everything that happens now. Two million people marched against the war on 15 February and, even after the fighting had finished, over 200,000 marched on 12 April.

Events of that sort redefine politics and pose new opportunities and challenges to socialists.

They make possible initiatives that previously were unthinkable—if socialists have the boldness to grasp them. The central slogan of the day's discussion was "No turning back".

The anti-war movement may have begun as a single-issue movement. But the core of activists have grown over into wider questions.

These include the role of imperialism and global corporate power but also social injustice in Britain, racism and the threat from the BNP.

Many people also want to be part of the discussions about how to build a political alternative to New Labour. In every area we should explore the possibilities this has thrown up.

We should also be thinking about candidates for the European elections and the London elections in June next year.

Everything we do needs to be relaunched in the context of these new realities.

As the elections recently showed, there is a huge pool of people who feel disenfranchised by the way all the traditional parties behave.

For a long time the level of class struggle has been

low. But there are signs of the potential for important battles.

The firefighters have been forced into reconsidering strikes.

There are already important struggles going on over London weighting. There is the exciting possibility of a strike by London postal workers driven entirely by pressure from below.

Teachers are gearing up for a campaign against the SATs tests.

We have to bring the energy and confidence of the anti-war and the anti-capitalist movement to the workplaces.

We also have to get the social weight of the organised labour and trade union movement behind attempts to set up a socialist alternative to Blair.

The same goes for building a unified fight against the BNP Nazis.

While seeing the big picture and looking outwards, we also have to give attention to the sales and distribution of *Socialist Worker*. It is no good creating networks of buyers around, say, the firefighters' strike or the school

students' strikes if we then abandon them a few weeks later. That would pull apart those networks.

The strategic and tactical discussions that SWP members need to have will only happen if there are vibrant branches in every area.

Such branches have been set up very successfully in some areas. Now the best experience needs to be generalised to more places, especially in the big cities.

The best local Marxist forums have brought together activists from inside and outside the SWP to discuss key political questions. We need more of them.

Marxism 2003 flows naturally from such forums.

This year it will be a different event to previous years. People know that the SWP has been centrally involved in the Stop the War Coalition, in defending George Galloway, in building for the protest in Evian and in seeking an alternative to Labour.

It will not be just a party event. It can bring together the most political sections of the movement to discuss the politics we need.

Charlie Kimber

Reach out to new forces

"THERE are extraordinary opportunities for us in the aftermath of the huge anti-war demonstrations," said film-maker and socialist Ken Loach.

He was speaking at the 300-strong Socialist Alliance annual conference in London last Saturday.

The possibilities opening up for a challenge to New Labour have already been reflected in the successes that the Socialist Alliance and the Scottish Socialist Party enjoyed in the local elections on 1 May. The Scottish Socialist Party got six MSPs while the Socialist Alliance got their first elected councillor.

"If we are to have a broader movement we need a simple, principled programme—opposition to the occupation of Iraq and to the privatisation of public services," argued Ken Loach.

"Our movement needs to spring out of the Stop the War Coalition."

Michael Lavalette was elected as a Socialist Alliance councillor in Preston. "People in the anti-war movement began discussing standing after they met our local Labour MP and he just told them they didn't represent anybody," he explained to the conference.

"One of the imams in the local mosque argued



Ken Loach

that people should support me, even though the Labour candidate was a Muslim.

"Once it became clear I was in with a shout, large numbers of white workers and Labour Party members came over and campaigned for us."

Heather Cox told the conference about Socialist Alliance election successes in Telford in the west Midlands: "We got 14 percent in one ward where we have never stood before. The key was the support from members of the local Stop the War Coalition."

Sue Wild from Barnsley reported, "I got over 17 percent of the vote."

"Lots of Labour activists refused to give out their party's leaflets. But we had more people out leafleting than ever before because people from the Stop the War Coalition helped."

Alan Thornett, a national executive member of the Socialist Alliance, proposed a key

motion relaunching the Socialist Alliance as part of a coalition of broader left wing forces.

He argued for the need to campaign now and to focus on the European Parliament, Greater London Assembly and council elections which will all take place on 10 June next year.

"We need to take new initiatives to begin discussions with anti-war activists, including those from the Muslim community, trade unionists, Labour Party members who have torn up their cards, and organisations still outside the Alliance. With no preconditions, no set agenda, we need to expand our forces," he argued.

Nick Wrack supported this strategy, arguing, "The Socialist Alliance has to take a qualitative turn outwards. There is a crisis of political representation both electorally and between elections."

John Rees from the national executive of the Alliance told *Socialist Worker*, "It is now possible to go to the RMT and FBU unions, to the Muslim community and to activists from the Stop the War Coalition and form a common platform. In every area people can reach out to new forces and work with them."

Judy Cox

Summing it up

SOME 60 members of the SWP spoke at the Party Council. One contribution that summed up what many felt came from Lewisham delegate Moira Nolan.

"Many activists in the anti-war movement make

the links between being anti-war and other issues, and they have a profound respect for the role that the SWP has played in the Stop the War Coalition.

"In Lewisham, we have been central to building a big anti-war movement with mass meetings of 700 in January and over 250

last week. Activists should be equally proud of our role and our politics and reach out to those people. It is a mistake to ignore the potential for many of these activists to support or join the Socialist Alliance and thereby to transform the project to build a socialist alternative to New Labour.

"We also need to ensure that new SWP members are really involved in our organisation—their involvement will strengthen everything we do. Getting *Socialist Worker* to them every week should be a priority in the coming weeks."

In brief

School revolts against job cuts

ARENTS AND teachers at rofton School in Lewisham, outh London, have launched campaign to stop 11 teaching taff being made redundant.

Members of the National ion of Teachers (NUT) at rofton are balloting for strike ction.

If the proposed job cuts go head, one in seven teachers t the school will be made edundant.

Staff are very angry that hey have worked so hard to et the school through a successful OFSTED inspection nd are now being rewarded ith job cuts.

A lobby of the governors' eeting is planned on Tuesday 0 May at 6pm and other local choools are being asked to uild for it.

Action takes off at Heathrow

ROUND 120 workers staged wo unofficial walkouts over roduction bonuses on the eathrow Terminal 5 project wo weeks ago.

They were expecting to get 500 each for their work from 2 January to the Easter Bank oliday. Their employer, CA lackwell, gave them less than 20 each.

After a meeting on Tuesday f last week the production onus has been replaced by an ttendance bonus estimated at 60 a week.

The TGWU union is considering a strike ballot over the ssue.

Yard workers try to sink pay deal

HIPYARD WORKERS on he Clyde and in Barrow have ejected a new pay deal offered y BAE Systems.

Union leaders recommended he 3.2 percent deal. The Scot- town and Barrow yards re-ected the deal, while the maller Govan yard accepted it.

Bosses want to introduce a ack shift at Scotstoun and ack 1,000 workers at Barrow.

Clear verdict on courts' staff pay

AGISTRATES' courts work- rs in the Amo union in Eng- and and Wales rejected a 3 ercent pay deal by 15 to one ast week.

In a turnout of over 50 per- ent, the vast majority of union embers also said they were illing to take action for better ay.

Resistance tour around Scotland

S PART of the Globalise Resistance Scotland tour to pro- te his new book, *An nti-Capitalist Manifesto*, lex Callinicos spoke to 60 eople at an event in Edin- urgh hosted by WordPower orkshop.

Earlier in the day he spoke n Glasgow and on Monday ook the tour on to Dundee niversity and to St Andrews yre Theatre.

Museum workers exhibit defiance

CS CIVIL service union embers in the British Museum ast week discussed their cam- aign against management lans to cut security staff by ver 20 percent.

The British Museum has a 6.5 million deficit. Govern- ent funding has declined by 0 percent in the last ten years. orkers struck in June last year gainst 15 percent staff cuts.

Journalists

Massive vote for the union at *Telegraph*

JOURNALISTS AT the *Telegraph* newspapers have overwhelmingly voted for union recognition.

The ballot saw 91 percent of those voting support recognition of the National Union of Journalists (NUJ). The vote was in a formal ballot under the latest union laws and will lead to recognition.

It is the latest step in turning back the anti-union tide which swept the media industry in the 1980s and 1990s.

The high water mark of the bosses' offensive came with the bitter 1980s Wapping dispute, when Rupert Murdoch smashed the journalists' and print unions on his national titles including the *Sun*, *News of the World* and *Times*.

Journalists at the *Daily Telegraph*, *Sunday Telegraph*, *Spectator* magazine and the *Telegraph.co.uk* website voted last week by 361 to 34 for NUJ recognition.

The *Telegraph* is owned by right wing Canadian billionaire Conrad Black, an arch Tory who is also a friend of US war criminal Henry Kissinger.

And the *Telegraph* and its editor, Charles Moore, have been at the centre of the smears against the anti-war movement and George Galloway.

One NUJ member said, "Pay and conditions were the basic things pushing people to want the union back.

"But a lot of people working here hate what the *Telegraph* stands for and voted with a smile for union recognition because it was also sticking two fingers up to people like

Moore and Black."

In common with many of the national papers *Telegraph* management have pushed more of the work onto people on casual contracts, where people are paid by the shift.

Many young journalists, or student journalists, work unsocial hours at rates of pay that have not increased for at least four years.

All these were included in the union recognition ballot, a move which marks an important step in winning union rights for this group of media workers.

Malaise

One NUJ member said, "You've got a general malaise in here and things have been intensifying over the last few years.

Pay is the issue around which things have crystallised.

"Behind that is management's constant cost-cutting lunatic schemes, paring down on editorial staff, focusing on sales and advertising, and new technology brought in without people being properly trained."

Join sacked BBC Arabic Service journalists Adli Hawwari and Abdul-Hadi Jiad

Thursday 15 May, 12.30pm, outside Bush House, Kingsway, London (Temple or Holborn 6). Called by NUJ

Nursery nurses

'We care too much not to fight back'

AROUND 140 nursery nurses in Kirklees, West Yorkshire, started a five-day strike on Monday.

The strikers, who are members of the Unison union, have already taken four days of action and have now stepped up their campaign to win a pay regrading.

Jill Hinchliffe, a nursery nurse shop steward, said, "We are determined to win our fight.

"We have been underpaid for years and they thought we would just put up with it because we cared about the

future of the children.

"But that is the reason that this fight is so important because it is a scandal that so much of the education system relies on low-paid women.

"There was no shortage of money for the war in Iraq. That money should have been used to provide fair pay for the low paid."

The resolve of the strikers has been increased by the council's refusal to enter meaningful talks.

This week the strikers were visiting workplaces throughout

Nottingham.

Conference voted that money spent on the war would have been better spent on education.

Delegates condemned the Israeli occupation of Palestine and conference voted in favour of twinning with Palestinian universities.

After an intense debate a proposed boycott of Israeli universities was defeated.

Activists at the conference decided to launch a rank and file newspaper.

JAMES CUSSENS

Recognition is only the start of a fight as the *Telegraph's* pay review is due in October and it is vital the union is organised to win a significant claim.

Jeremy Dear, NUJ general secretary, says, "This is a fantastic result—the biggest and one of the most significant recognition agreements the NUJ has won for years.

"We had to go through more than a year of legal wrangling over the details of the ballot, and the company tried as hard as it could to get people to vote against.

Many of Britain's national newspapers, including the *Independent*—which won union recognition last year—and the *Telegraph*, are now centred in the giant Canary Wharf office complex in east London.

The complex was hailed by Margaret Thatcher's Tory governments as a union-free zone.

Yet now a tide of unionisation is rolling through the media titles there. The Mirror Group is also located at Canary Wharf, and does not recognise unions.

But a meeting a couple of weeks ago saw dozens of staff at the *Racing Post*, one of the group's key titles, turn up to discuss joining the union. Dozens have now done so.

Rupert Murdoch's titles are just along the river front from Canary Wharf, at Wapping.

Kate Simon is the chair of Canary Wharf NUJ, and union rep at the *Independent*. She says, "The unions are coming back—next stops the *Mirror* and then Wapping!"

Newsquest



Defiant on the picket line in Radcliffe

JOURNALISTS across seven Lancashire newspapers are in their fourth week of indefinite strike action for better pay and conditions.

Most of the 60 striking journalists are from the *Bolton Evening News* or *Bury Times*, where trainee reporters earn under £11,000 and seniors earn less than £16,000.

The journalists walked out over a pitiful below-inflation 2 percent pay increase offered by US-owned News-

quest. They are demanding 7 percent.

The pay offer doesn't reflect increases in inflation, which now stands at 2.9 percent, and the fact that national insurance has increased by 1 percent.

Newsquest's US parent company, Gannett, made over a billion dollars profit last year. Newsquest Lancashire made savings of half a million in cuts alone.

The journalists are determined to carry on and the strike has helped pull them together.

David Thompson, father of the chapel (branch secretary) for the NUJ at Bolton and Bury, said, "The camaraderie between journalists, especially the Bolton and Bury staff, is brilliant.

"It was difficult for them

to keep in touch before, but the strike has united us and given us an enhanced collective support."

Journalists became further enraged this week when bosses offered one-off payments, linking long service with performance.

David added, "Trying to link the two is an insult, and the fact that we have not caved in and have stayed out will show management how we feel about it."

The maximum a journalist serving ten years at the paper could get, as long as management rated their performance as A grade, is £350.

The union has offered management the chance to go to ACAS for binding arbitration but so far they have not replied.

KATE COYNE

Afghan refugee protest

"THERE ARE schools, but there's no equipment in them. The shops are open, but there is nothing on the shelves. Afghanistan is a lawless country."

This is what an Afghan protester said at last Sunday's 350-strong demonstration in Whitehall against the mass deportation of 21 Afghan asylum seekers two weeks ago.

Rumours are that at least two of the deportees are now dead, one after committing suicide and the other from a heart attack.

Many of those sent back in home secretary David Blunkett's latest bout of "get tough on asylum seekers" policies have disappeared into what one protester called a country of warlords.

As one speaker said: "All we want is to be allowed to work and pay our taxes.

"Yet the government is sending us back. There is no police, no security.

"The US and Britain said they would support us. But where are they? The West has abandoned us.

"Now, when we go for a job and people see we are from Afghanistan, they say we are from a terrorist country, and we don't get the job."

Diary Upcoming events

Saturday 17 May

●Free Palestine national rally, 1.30pm, Trafalgar Square, London. Called by Palestine Solidarity Campaign.

●Imperialism and the anti-war movement—conference, 10am-5pm, Hamish Wood Building, Glasgow Caledonian University. Organised by Globalise Resistance.

E-mail grscotland@yahoo.co.uk or phone 07985 797 022.

Sat 24 May-Sun 25 May

●Endless war and the Project for the New American Century—conference, 10.30am-6.30pm, Chaplaincy Centre, Bristo Square, Edinburgh University. Organised by

Edinburgh Stop the War Coalition and Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign.

Saturday 31 May

●Stop privatisation—the case for council housing. Defend Council Housing national conference, 11am-4.30pm, Friends Meeting House, Liverpool. Phone 07951 156 881.

Sunday 1 June

●Mass demo at G8 summit in Evian, France, as part of a week of protests and counter-conferences from Wed 28 May to Tue 3 June.

Sunday 8 June

●Jeremy Hardy *Versus the Israeli Army*, film showing and question and answer session, 8pm, Bloomsbury Theatre, 15 Gordon St, London. For tickets phone 020 7388 8822.

Friday 4-Friday 11 July

●Marxism 2003, central London. A week of debates, forums and meetings organised by the Socialist Workers Party.

ALL REPORTS MUST BE IN BY 12 NOON MONDAY

London weighting

Determined to win decent pay for all

WORKERS IN schools, council offices and universities—some of them among the lowest paid in London—struck last week as part of their union's campaign for decent allowances for working in the capital.

The council workers' action was over three days and involved about 1,000 Unison union members in selected schools and offices.

The university workers struck for two days in the old universities (ones called universities before 1992).

A strike rally on Wednesday brought 200 people together from both areas. The strikers were overwhelmingly women and concentrated in the worst paid grades.

Star Primary was one of 16 schools in Newham, east London, where Unison members struck.

"The response here is 100 percent," union rep Sue Hurley told *Socialist Worker*. "We've got about 40 Unison members—about two dozen came on the picket line."

"We work our guts out," said Nicole Austin, a teaching assistant at the school. "We do the dinner duty so we only get 0 minutes lunch. We work with individual children, but we are treated as dogsbodies."

"At the end of the week we take home just £160. I'm single mum and that leaves me with £20 to spare after housing and council tax costs."

"There's another woman who would be £4 a week worse off if she was on income support. She does her job like the rest of us because she is dedicated."

"All we are asking for is 4,000 a year in London allowance. The police get over 6,000."

Rose Holley has worked at Star Primary as a classroom assistant for three years. She says, "Our job used to be called

by KEVIN OVENDEN

a learning assistant. Now they have changed the name and it means you spend less time working with the children.

"You end up doing everything. The head here even tried to get us in after the end of term to do the cleaning."

"All of us are against this new agreement with the government that will mean us being forced to take whole classes."

"It's about teaching on the cheap," says Sue Hurley. "This will mean us doing the teachers' job without the training and the pay."

Active

Pat Ishmel, deputy convenor of housing in Hamersmith and Fulham, told the rally there was "a 100 percent walkout in our area."

"We've recruited 20 new union members in the section since the campaign started. Our shop is really active—involved in leafleting, picketing and lobbying."

Jacqui Freeman from the SOAS university said, "Our human resources manager did us a favour by putting out an e-mail that was designed to frighten us but actually made people more angry and determined."

"We spoke to a lot of members of the AUT lecturers' union on our picket line. They



The anger against low pay was seen at Star Primary in east London last week

were very clear that there should be united action across the unions in the universities.

"We are looking at imaginative ways to up the campaign as well as looking to further action—hopefully united with lecturers."

"Striking during enrolment week would be very effective."

The university workers in Unison struck for two days.

Dot Pearce from King's College reports, "This was the fourth round of strike action in a campaign that began last autumn and has involved all the college unions—Unison, Amicus and the lecturers' AUT—striking together in

November and February.

"This time it was Unison members striking alone. We need to build the sort of united action by all the college unions that can force an increase in our pay."

"As a postal worker we met on the picket line told us, 'We should all be out together over London weighting'."

Many sections of public sector workers are furious over the level of London allowances. Teachers are campaigning now for action next term after the government has come up with half-hearted and divisive schemes

over allowance payments.

Various strikes by different groups have shown the determination of the lowest paid to win a rise that will allow them to live in London.

The Unison union is calling further selective strikes for council workers next week and next month.

Local branches of Unison and other unions are discussing how to draw the fights together.

All are clear that their fight to get more money from the government is at the centre of a wider struggle to raise public sector pay across Britain.

Firefighters

Action is needed to beat back attacks

THE EXECUTIVE of the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) was to meet this week in the wake of John Prescott taking a further step towards imposing a deal on firefighters and control staff.

"There is immense anger at Prescott," says Albie Lythgoe from the FBU on Merseyside.

"Our brigade has voted to continue to fight by calling more strikes. We are prepared to walk out if Prescott imposes—that's whether the national union calls us out or not."

"Merseyside is saying no to the Burchill proposals, which our national executive has argued are a basis for settling the dispute."

"Burchill opens the door to the employers' so called modernisation drive. We should be getting back to a straight fight over pay."

Strong

There is a strong feeling that the talk of imposing an offer is designed to intimidate the FBU into settling for far less than what firefighters began this fight for.

"There has been repeated talk of imposing an offer," says Andy Brickles from East Midlands FBU.

"When we have struck, that talk has gone out the window. The mood to strike is back up. Any new strike dates announced this week have to be followed through on."

Many employers and chief fire officers are already driving through plans for cuts.

In Manchester the chief officer has been ordering two firefighters in a van to respond to grass fires—without water and equipped only with beaters.

A firefighter was suspended for refusing to work in this dangerous way and has just won reinstatement thanks to a determined stand by the union.

Cambridge is already campaigning against a reduction from two stations to one.

"We have to draw the line

now," says Neale Williams from north London.

"The retreats by our national leadership have left us in this position. Accepting Burchill would be another retreat."

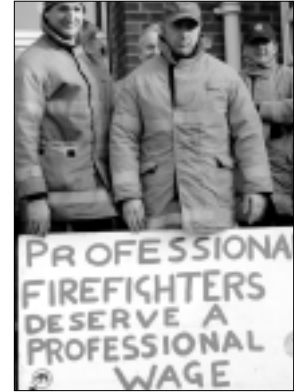
"I don't want to be hearing that we've done well because Prescott hasn't imposed a deal but we have accepted a terrible deal from the employers."

"The signals are not good. The 'informal talks' between our union and the employers have been about an offer and a counter-offer which are both unacceptable."

"The government has taken a hard line. Our leadership has to learn from the mistakes of the last few months and take an equally hard line."

"If the members feel our leadership has the will to fight, even the weaker areas will too. A determined stand would rally huge support in the trade union movement."

"Anything short of a fighting response by our union risks disaster."



Many firefighters want more action

Anti-war

OVER 400 people packed into Friends Meeting House in central Manchester on Friday of last week for a Stop the War Coalition rally on the occupation of Iraq.

There was standing room only and the atmosphere was electric. George Galloway was given a standing ovation and greeted with cheers.

A video and CD-ROM of the rally are available at www.manchestertothewar.org

RICHARD SEARLE

OVER 250 people attended a rally organised by Lewisham Stop the War Coalition on Wednesday of last week.

George Galloway was given a standing ovation when he arrived, and after he spoke.

MOIRA NOLAN

A NOISY crowd of around 100 people picketed a local restaurant in the Rusholme area of Manchester on Thursday of last week to protest at the presence of two pro-war MPs at a Labour Party function.

The MPs, Manchester's Gerald Kaufman and Blairite Peter Mandelson, were greeted with chants of "Troops out of Iraq! Liars out of Rusholme!" and a barrage of eggs.

ANNA SOUTHERN

OVER 80 people attended a debate between anti-war activists and pro-war politicians at Swindon College (FE) on Friday of last week.

The mood was strongly anti-war.

ANDY & SARAH NEWMAN

Postal workers

LONDON POSTAL workers were this week considering the latest moves in their fight to win better London weighting.

The discussions follow the remarkable ballot, organised unofficially, which saw workers vote by 19,803 votes to 91 for action over pay.

London CWU union officials met general secretary Billy Hayes last week. He pledged serious consideration of their case and he was due to come to a reps' meeting this week to spell out his position.

Such moves are interpreted by many as a snub to John Keggie, the union's deputy general secretary (postal). Keggie, who would normally handle such issues, is totally opposed to the London campaign.

It will be a tribute to rank and file pressure if Billy Hayes takes up the issue, quickly submits a claim for £4,000 London weighting and guarantees a strike ballot if the claim is refused.

Socialist Worker supporters in the London post will be arguing that unless he can make such pledges then the London region should call a day of action, including strikes, this month.

Anything else risks losing the

momentum of the campaign.

The London reps should call a protest demonstration at Royal Mail headquarters to give postal workers a chance to show their anger about their poverty pay.

Postal workers have a few days left to get in their ballot papers for the CWU deputy general secretary postal election. They should vote for Dave Ward in order to derail Keggie and his "partnership" agenda.

Health workers

IN THE latest phase of the revolt against low pay in the NHS, hundreds of health workers in east London plan strikes later this month against their private contractor employers.

Domestic, portering and catering staff at Homerton University Hospital and Whipps Cross hospital have already voted for action.

Workers at Mile End and St Clements hospitals are set to join in if their ballot result next week is in favour of strikes.

Homerton and Whipps

TGWU elections

SOME 850,000 members of the Transport and General Workers Union, the TGWU, received ballot papers last week.

The TGWU is voting for a new general secretary to replace Bill Morris. *Socialist Worker* is urging its readers to vote for Tony Woodley, the deputy general secretary.

Downing Street is reported to be worried about having another left wing critic elected to lead a major union.

Cross workers are employed by ISS Mediclean, the others by Medirest.

Staff employed by ISS Mediclean get as little as £4.42 an hour, have no London weighting, lower overtime rates than NHS workers, no company sick pay and no pension.

The workers are members of the Unison union but have also won backing from the TELCO community organisation.

DIANA SWINGLER, Unison branch chair, Homerton University Hospital

Union insiders say Tony Woodley has the most branch nominations. Woodley has addressed anti-war demos. He is "extremely disappointed" with Blair's New Labour, which is "far too firmly wedded to big business and to the middle classes".

Next in the race for nominations is another left winger, Barry Camfield. Camfield has spoken out against the war and for the restoration of workers' right to take secondary action.

Jack Dromey, the candidate most closely associated with the Labour Party leadership, is trailing in third place.

There is still a danger that Dromey could win the election because the left vote will be divided between two candidates.

Woodley best reflects ordinary members' opposition to New Labour.

The key for expressing this anger is building rank and file organisation through campaigns over low pay, privatisation and fighting against job cuts.

Woodley won the election for deputy general secretary last year despite winning fewer branch nominations than his rival.

Anti-SATs tests

ABOUT 100 parents of children at Parkside School in Norwich attended a meeting on the SATs tests where education secretary Charles Clarke debated with a local head teacher last Friday.

The whole meeting turned against Clarke as speakers from the floor voiced their opposition to SATs.

Clarke spoke for ten minutes attempting to defend SATs, claiming they are linked to raising standards. No one was taken in.

One objection after another made it clear that there are fundamental reasons why they should be scrapped urgently.

People said how they damage the self confidence of children at an age as early as seven. Many feel labelled as thick and have low self esteem.

Others spoke of how the testing regime does not help teachers plan for their pupils' needs. Instead it controls what teachers do.

The head teacher described how exams contradict her ethos of teaching and learning as well as potentially undermine the trust her pupils have in her.

The meeting ended with a

call for parents to boycott the tests. This was enthusiastically welcomed.

There is a strong possibility parents and teachers together could win this.

CAROLINE RILEY

Rail workers

SOME 75 tube union activists attended an impressive meeting last week to defend victimised RMT union rep Glenroy Watson.

Among the platform speakers were RMT general secretary Bob Crow, London organiser Booby Law and Brian Munro, secretary of the London Transport Regional Council of the union.

They all spoke of the attack on a longstanding activist.

A speaker from the TUC's black workers' conference underlined London Underground's attack on a leading black trade unionist.

The union is to move to ballot all its members in the Finsbury Park area in north London if the victimisation is not lifted.

UNJUM MIRZA

Socialist Worker

DEFIANT STRIKE SWEEPS FRANCE

FRANCE GROUND to a halt on Tuesday.

Trains, buses and tubes tayed in their depots, lanes in their hangars as orkers walked out across he country.

Many toll-booths were bandoned on the country's ay-to-use motorways.

Postal workers, civil serants, teachers, council orkers and many more cross the public sector were oined by many private sector orkers in engineering and lsewhere.

Firefighters and bank orkers also joined the trikes. Print workers struck nd no newspapers were rinted for Tuesday.

Up to two million workers walked out in the biggest trike France has seen since he mass public sector trikes of December 1995.

Those strikes broke a ory government which asaulted welfare provision. his week's walkouts turned n a similar assault. The takes are just as high.

"The street will not overn," France's Tory prime inister Jean-Pierre Raffarin eclared last week.

He is out to push through n attack on workers' pension

PAUL McGARR
reports from Paris

rights. The country's bosses and Tory president Jacques Chirac back him.

The street gave a roaring answer to Raffarin on Tuesday, as hundreds of thousands of strikers joined demonstrations across France.

In Paris some 200,000 marched. Tens of thousands joined similar protests in at least 115 other towns and cities across France.

Raffarin wants to force workers to work longer to qualify for full pension rights, and pay more in contributions.

Many workers will face lower pensions, as the government seeks to force them to take out additional private pensions linked to the stock market. Some workers could see pensions cut by up to 35 percent.

Many British workers will recognise attacks they face from bosses and New Labour.

Firefighter Julien Valois told *Socialist Worker*, "We have a pensions scheme that allows us to retire at 55. It's a hard job and we don't want to be forced to work until 60 or 65 even.

"The government talks about 'reform', but that always seems to mean cuts and making us work longer and harder."

"We've been on strike since 8 May against the pension plans and government attacks on education," says classroom assistant Florence Baumler.

Money

"The teachers and the assistants are all together. The money is there. It's just a question of whether it goes to profits or to social need.

"We have mass meetings every morning. We'll be voting to stay out until we win."

"It's simple," Samuel Thaliu, a 23 year old rail worker, said. "We pay 37.5 years contribution for our pension now. The government wants us to pay for 40, even 42, years.

"It's like in 1995 when the government attacked welfare. We all had to strike. We have to do the same today.

Jean Leost, a nurse, said, "Raffarin says, 'The street will not govern.' But why not? We are the majority. That's democracy. He wants to govern for the bosses and

the bankers. We say no."

"Some of us walked out today," Oliver Picard, a car worker at Renault Flins, told *Socialist Worker*.

"It was a minority, but quite a lot. There are people here from Peugeot and big firms like Alcatel. This issue affects everyone."

The opposition Socialist Party, equivalent of Britain's Labour Party, verbally backed Tuesday's protest, but its leaders agree with the government on pushing through pension "reform".

The main trade unions backed Tuesday's strike and demonstrations. They have called more days of action, including a national demonstration on Sunday 25 May.

Action

Many of those striking on Tuesday think that is inadequate, and want more determined action.

Tens of thousands of teachers are already on indefinite strike. They were determined to continue after Tuesday.

Other groups of workers, including the powerful rail workers, were to meet on Tuesday or Wednesday to discuss whether to stay out.

Some unions, those influenced by left wing organisations, are pushing for the strikes to be indefinite.

Other union federations, including the powerful CFDT and CGT, are seeking a deal with the government.

No one knew which feeling would win out in the debate among rank and file workers raging on Tuesday evening as *Socialist Worker* went to press.

For the last eight years France's bosses have been waiting for a chance to return to the offensive beaten back by the 1995 strikes.

History had another powerful resonance. It was on the same date, 13 May, that 35 years ago a mass demonstration sparked one of the biggest general strikes in history, and almost toppled the government of Charles de Gaulle.

Tuesday's Paris demonstration followed almost the same route as the historic 1968 march as it converged on the Place Denfert Rochereau.

Some on Tuesday's protest fervently hoped that workers today could show the same spirit to break the government's assault as they did in 1968.

Revolt erupts against pension attacks



The Paris demonstration saw huge contingents of teachers and from the CGT unions

Picture: Sion Touhig

Europe resists welfare cuts

THE GOVERNMENT attacks on pensions and welfare provision in France is part of a wider assault across Europe.

And it has been met with resistance.

Austria last week saw its first national strike for half a century against an attack on workers' pension rights by the right wing government.

Up to 500,000 marched. More strikes and protests were set for Tuesday.

In Germany the Social Democrat (Labour) chancellor Gerhard Schroeder faces a growing crisis.

The biggest May Day marches for many years saw workers express deep anger over government plans to push through savage pension and welfare cuts.

Schroeder is taking his plans to a special Social Democrat Party conference.

The German chancellor has all but threatened to resign unless he gets backing

for his plans.

German trade unions have staged the first in a series of "warning strikes" at major engineering companies demanding a shorter working week to cut unemployment.

The powerful IG Metall union has threatened full-blown strikes.

Behind the Europe-wide attacks on pensions and welfare lies an austerity drive which is being pushed by the European Union and the World Bank.

Germany and France are well over the government deficit limits set by the European Central Bank as part of the Maastricht Treaty which paved the way for the euro currency.

The World Bank last week issued a report demanding that European Union countries cut pension rights down to the levels in the former Eastern European countries which want to join the European Union.

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